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An Interview with Theodore Sturgeon

by David G. Hartwell

This taped conversation with Sturgeon took place over two sessions at the World Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles, in September 1972. At the time, I was a consulting editor at New American Library, a graduate student at Columbia, a reviewer and had a bi-monthly column on sf in *Crawdaddy* magazine. It was in my guise as interviewer for the rock magazine that I set up an appointment with Ted Sturgeon. My underlying motive was a deep and abiding interest in the man and his works. I would have lacked the confidence, if not the literary insight, to call him the finest literary craftsman in the history of modern sf and to call his fiction the best body of work in shorter forms thus far written in sf then. I wish to do so now. Of all the giants of sf, Sturgeon is The Artist. Not Heinlein, not Bradbury, nor Kuttner & Moore, nor Blish, none of the great craftsmen match him. Philip K. Dick wrote many powerful stories, but resched his deepest and strongest powers as a novelist—only a few of his finest shorter works do not pale in comparison to Sturgeon's general output.

Since his death in 1985, Sturgeon's fiction has begun to drift out of print and out of the consciousness of the current reader of fantasy and sf. While this is true of many of the other first-rate sf writers, Simak and Dick and Tiptree among them, if it happens to Sturgeon's work, then we begin to lose our highest standards of comparison as to what constitutes the best in the field. We cannot afford to neglect our home grown Chaucer without risking the loss of a whole renaissance happening and to come.

A few hundred words of Sturgeon's conversations appeared in my *Crawdaddy* column, and more bits appeared in Paul Williams' various pieces on Sturgeon (the Rolling Stone essay, Gregg Press intros), but the majority has never been printed. I offer this version of Sturgeon alive and well in honor of the man and his work.

I. Self-Portrait of the Artist

As we sat in a hotel room at LAcon I, Ted began to talk about science fiction conventions, then smoothly shifted gears into the principal of his own concerns.

TS: I don't know if there is any other branch of literature which has anything remotely like this. It is not a simple thing. People desperately want to be in, and there are furniture conventions, and carport conventions and paint oil & varnish conventions, in which the same kind of "in" thing is there—there's "them" outside and there's us. And this factor is very strong in science fiction. But in view of the fact that it's a literary field, and is therefore a living thing, and therefore a growing thing, changing thing, the changes in the literature are sometimes bitterly fought by the conference attendees, because they like that "in" thing, they like that clubhouse membership.

The field is very definitely a growing thing—it's a more reflective form and more responsive to the increasing growth and change that we're going through than any other form of literature. It has no limits—this is its special appeal for me. All my life has been that—that there are no horizons, there are no limits to it whatsoever. Only in poetry

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Theodore Sturgeon's words live on
Brian Stableford explores sf theater
Samuel R. Delany examines sf's margins
Gwyneth Jones looks at *Women of Vision*
Richard Lupoff faces Mars' enigmatic surface
Loren J. MacGregor on William Sanders
And lots of reviews, features, and reading
lists of the best books of 1988.

Henceforward: SF in the Theatre

by Brian Stableford

Science fiction on the stage, as Samuel R. Delany observed in his article "Flow My Tears...Theater and Science Fiction" in *NYRSP* #1, has had a rather dicey career. Delany goes on to lament the failure of several recent American experiments in sf theatre, and to express doubts about future prospects. There may, I believe, be grounds for greater optimism on this score to be found in a current production on the London stage: Alan Ayckbourn's *Henceforward*.

That theatrical sf has encountered great difficulties is hardly surprising, given the limitations of theatre production. The writer of prose has as much freedom of representation as the language allows, which makes it absurdly easy for him to deal with the grandiose and the grotesque. The cinema—which until recently could hardly begin to compete—now has a spectacular array of special effects available to it, but these depend heavily on the fact that hours or months of off-screen effort can be devoted to the careful production of mere seconds of screen-time. The theatre's scene-shifting is restricted to the movement of objects upon a relatively small stage, and the performance is played out in real time. These limitations have put severe restrictions on the kinds of sf story which could easily be adapted for the stage.

There are, in fact, only two sf motifs which lend themselves very readily to stage adaptations. One is the timeslip, which has been used most prolifically by J. B. Priestley in such plays as *Dangerous Corner* and *Time and the Conways*. The other is, of course, the robot (the word itself is borrowed from Capek's *R.U.R.*, though the "robots" in that play are not mechanical humanoids but artificial organic constructs).

Numerous plays have been written which feature machines sufficiently human to be played by actors in relatively light make-up, who need only cultivate a jerky style of movement to get into character. The earliest known to me is an anonymous skit called *Mechanical Jane* which was published by Samuel French in 1910. It features a mechanical housemaid which proves unsuitable because it obstinately persists in following its programming in entirely inappropriate circumstances, dusting and sweeping away with blithe disregard for the

(Continued on page 3)

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human beings it is supposed to be serving. The basic pattern recurs in various other plays, exploiting the same visual jokes in more elaborate fashion. The principal extrapolation of the theme for plotting purposes consists of adding in a little comic love interest. Thus, there is no surprise in discovering that Samuel French's robot play for 1950 was a three-act called *The Perfect Woman* by Wallace Geoffrey and Basil Mitchell (having first been produced in 1948 at London's Playhouse Theatre), which features a rather sexy robot called Emyntrode.

Henceforward, which opened at the Vaudeville Theatre in December, 1988, is the most recent contribution to this noble tradition of theatrical sf. It features a robot nanny played by a jerkily-moving female actor in light make-up, which has the unfortunate habit of following its programming in inappropriate circumstances, occasionally grabbing people in order to scrub their faces, and repeatedly making an awful mess of such tasks as washing-up and changing the beds (offstage, the relevant mayhem being communicated by sound-effects).

Henceforward has several things going for it which its predecessors did not—a more able playwright and a high-class cast for starters. It also has the benefits of new video technology, which significantly expands the range of special effects by allowing the audience to see both telephone callers and callers at an "outside door" on a center-stage screen. The futuristic implications of these devices are enhanced by a brief sample of the awful advertisements which will undoubtedly begin to clutter up our video-answerphones as soon as the technology becomes available. (Such technological aids also save on actors—this is not the first play premiered in London this year which has cast-members who are not required to appear live on stage.)

Like all Ayckbourn's plays, *Henceforward* is a tragicomedy about the dismal (but in his view inevitable) failure of intimate relationships. Ian McKellen plays a composer deserted some years before by his wife and daughter because of his habit of recording every sound made in every room of the house, so that he may use them as elements in his computer-aided compositions. He now lives alone, the equalizer of his existence compounded rather than alleviated by the robot, which was

entrusted to his charge by the chap who once lived down the hall, but there is a possibility that his daughter may be allowed to visit him again if only he can prove to his ex-wife and her social worker that his home is fit to visit. His attempt to hire a girl from an escort agency to masquerade as his live-in lover seems to be succeeding beyond his wildest hopes until he unwisely plays back to her the composition he has worked up from the sounds of their love-making, at which point she decides that his ex-wife had the right idea. There is only one thing he can do, and that is to repair and modify the robot's programming until it can present a passable simulation of the perfect step-parent.

This initial descent into the morass of well-tried cliché is comical in an altogether expectable fashion, but Ayckbourn's humor, however amiable and unthreatening it may be on the surface, has always been black underneath. Since he began to go outside the restrictions of happenstance associated with ordinary domestic comedy, as he did in his TV parody of *Deliverance*, *Way Upstream* (1987), he has been eager to exploit in more phantasmagoric fashion the potential which comedy has for turning into something utterly horrific. The final act of *Henceforward* thus becomes a theatrical *tour de force* as all the jokes cease to be funny when their logical implications are coolly and clinically displayed, and events progress to a *grand guignol* climax which is chilling in its perverse but all-too-plausible irony. The audience is allowed to remain fully aware of the absurdity of the fiction that the actress dressed up as a robot really is a mechanical contraption because Ayckbourn never tries to deny the essential silliness of the masquerade; what he does instead is to extrapolate the silliness to cruel extremes, which makes the audience—previously secure in the opinion that its perceptions were being flattered by a playful conceit—eventually realize that it is not being flattered at all, but rather seduced by smugness into laughing at an unfolding pattern of circumstance which is, when fully exposed, horribly cruel.

Despite the antiquity of the mechanical woman as a theatrical device, a good case can be made for the argument that *Henceforward* is the first play using such a device to be authentic (as contrasted with what Delany calls in his article "sci-fi"). What is, I think, interesting is

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Kathryn Cramer, Features Editor; L. W. Currey, Contributing Editor; Samuel R. Delany, Contributing Editor; David G. Hartwell, Reviews Editor; Susan Palwick, Short Fiction Editor.

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that it could not have acquired this status by forsaking all the conventional mechanical malfunction jokes in favor of an altogether earnest treatment of its theme, because the nature of theatre as a live, real-time medium would surely never permit such a treatment to work.

The cinema can now persuade an audience to suspend disbelief to the point where the viewer actually "sees" the robot as a robot and not as an actor in a tin suit, but the theatre will never be able to do that. The theatre audience will always "see through" the robot, perceiving it as a human in mechanical drag, and the playwright must therefore pandor to this "throughsight" by setting forward the conventional schemes of humor which are intrinsic to the situation-as-perceived. Nevertheless, Ayckbourn has demonstrated quite clearly in

Henceforward that this need not be a trap which restricts if theatre to the level of farce. He has shown that there is scope for building upon this complex perception, actually using comic doubtfulness of its believability to provide a telling commentary on the way the concepts of "human" and "mechanical" behavior might be redeployed in a revealing discourse about compassion, callousness and creativity—which is, of course, what Philip K. Dick tried to do in his stories and essays about androids and human beings, reproduction of which presents would-be dramatists with such very vexatious problems.

Brian Stableford is an of writer and scholar who lives in Reading, England. His most recent novel is *The Empire of Fear*.

The Monuments of Mars: A City on the Edge of Forever, by Richard C. Hoagland

North Atlantic Books, 1987 (third ed., revised and enlarged). 348 pp.

reviewed by Richard Lupoff

Given enough time, ten thousand monkeys pounding at the keyboards of ten thousand typewriters would recreate the works of Shakespeare. Even more intriguing, they would also recreate (or create) the lost works of Shakespeare: *Hamlet's Revenge*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream II*, *The Awakening*, *Macbeth versus Macbeth*.

Not to mention the lost Gospel of Jesus, the entire contents of the Library of Alexandria, and some more Continental Op stories by Dashiell Hammett. Or not by Dashiell Hammett.

For a long time the ten thousand monkeys were an interesting intellectual conceit, but had no literal application. But a large enough and fast enough computer could give practical meaning to the idea. It would be easy enough to furnish it with an internal dictionary, thereby precluding gibberish. No, xkldjflkls dkfioe cojvkljle! Of course there would still be a lot of nonsense generated. A parser could be applied to eliminate much of that. We would have to establish parameters, such as, Do we need complete sentences, each with its own subject and predicate? What about implied verbs? Sentence fragments? Exclamations?

OUCH!

The fact is that in an infinite universe Nature applies the Ten Thousand Monkey paradigm over and over. Children around the world gaze at passing clouds and see sailboats, dogs and horses, houses. I myself once saw God's trousers in the sky! People in all ages have looked at the randomly distributed stars and seen bees, whales, mighty hunters and beautiful goddesses. On an episode of *Cheers* Cliff Claven showed off a potato shaped exactly like Richard M. Nixon.

And in a Viking orbiter photograph of the planet Mars known by its index number as 35A72 (a frame as famous in some circles as the Dallas movies of Abraham Zapruder are among conspiracy buffs), there appears a remarkable image. It is an apparent representation of a human face, gazing straight up from the surface of Mars. You can see the brow, eyes, nose, mouth, chin, and an apparent representation of hair or a headress.

The photo was taken in 1976, and in the years since then the Martian "face" (sometimes simply known as the Face, and occasionally as the Martian Sphinx) has come in for its share of publicity. Most of it has been *National Enquirer* stuff, about a pet with the *Enquirer's* story headlined *STATUE OF ELVIS FOUND ON MARS, SPACESHIP BEAMS RACE "LOVE ME TENDER"*.

Other publications ranging from *Soviet Life* to *Analogue* to my hometown *Oakland Tribune* have given the Face less hysterical attention. And a circle of Face theorists has arisen, the most prominent among them being Richard C. Hoagland.

Hoagland's book—now in its third edition and still rolling along nicely—is an incredibly detailed examination of and extrapolation from the very limited data available on the Face. By examining 35A72 and other NASA frames, by computer-enhancing them, by converting them to linear diagrams, by mathematically analyzing them, by overlaying them with other images—Hoagland generates a fascinating case for the Face.

It's a full mile from crown to chin. If it's the product of design and engineering, of course it is a titanic piece of work, although hardly beyond conceiving. But—Martians? Humanoid Martians? Parallel

evolution? Ancient astronauts? UFOs?

The ghost of Ray Palmer, Kenneth Arnold, and Erich von Daniken hold their sides laughing. (Well, von Daniken is still alive, I think, but what the hell.)

Continuing to study 35A72 and other NASA frames, Hoagland "discovers" not only the Face, but another nearby monolith. This one resembles a human face also, but it is elongated, distorted. Is this another "human race"? A true Martian? And also nearby is a group of structures that Hoagland calls a City. It comes complete with a fortress, thoroughfares, Egyptian- and Mexican-style pyramids.

The photos are there. I look at them and I just see rocks. But then I read Hoagland's explanations and look at some of his diagrams and then I look and the "rocks" again, and I think, maybe...

Naww, it's all too silly!

But, maybe...

There's much more to *The Monuments of Mars* than this, including a great many references to scientific and science fictional treatments of Mars from Percival Lowell to Vladimir Avinsky and from Wells to Bradbury to Heinlein. Hoagland seems to have missed out on Weinbaum, but who's counting?

And of course there are tie-ins (or parallels with) Stonehenge and other terrestrial astro-engineering projects from the days of Babylon onward.

The problem is, Hoagland works from so little data, and his speculations and extrapolations are so huge, that the whole thing makes this reader, at least, very uneasy. It's a gigantic structure of theory built upon a tiny grain of evidence.

The Face is apparently real, not just a trick of light and shadow playing across a meaningless jumble of rocks. But the notion of a magnificent ancient civilization building the Face, the City, and a whole engineering enterprise the remnants of which remain visible after hundreds of thousands or even millions of years...*ahaw*, I don't know.

It's all so far-fetched, so cultish-sounding. But the more we learn about Mars, the more we're having to question our long-held ideas about the perpetually lifeless desert world. Volcanoes and valleys and, by golly, if not old Edgar Rice Burroughs' dead seabeds, then at least what look like some ancient ruins.

There was water on Mars long ago, and if it didn't evaporate off into space, it's still there somewhere, maybe frozen beneath the carbon dioxide ice at the poles.

Maybe Mars really did live, long ago. Maybe it will live again, someday. With its elliptical orbit and axial wobble there seems to be evidence of long-term climatic changes on Mars. Heck, we have them right here on Earth—ever hear of an Ice Age? And maybe the Face is the product of intelligence.

Or, then again, maybe it's just those ten thousand monkeys at work.

The only way we'll ever know for sure is to send probes back to Mars—preferably crewed by human explorers—and take a good close look at the thing.

Maybe Richard C. Hoagland is just a nut.

But maybe he's sane—and right. ▲

The Philip K. Dick Issue of *Science Fiction Studies* reviewed by Joseph Milicia



Is Philip K. Dick quite simply the best American author since WWII? The special issue of *Science Fiction Studies* devoted to Dick (July 1988) opens with such an appropriately provocative assertion, stated more carefully in the words of co-editor Carl Freedman: "The most accomplished, interesting and significant American novelist to have emerged since the Second World War" (p. 121). Without arguing the point, the twelve contributors to this issue operate on the assumption that Dick is indeed a "classic" of modern literature. Freedman locates the position of current Dick criticism as being beyond first excited discovery but not at the point of mechanical production for an "industry" (supposedly the state of Shakespeare studies).

The issue grew out of a 1986 conference in France, co-sponsored by Univ. of California-Riverside and the Sorbonne. George Slusser of Riverside was both co-organizer of the conference and co-editor of the Dick issue, which features versions of papers delivered at the conference. All in all, from the French contributors (all co-translated by Slusser) we get three articles plus a brief Afterword on the conference and a lengthy "Note" on gnosticism and irony in Dick's "Divine Trilogy"; and from the Americans, five articles plus Freedman's Editorial Introduction and a review by Gary Wolfe of Patricia Warrick's recent book on Dick's fiction.

The editors make no attempt at comprehensive coverage of Dick's achievement. Most of the French essays, plus Freedman's valuable introduction, are focused upon Dick's reputation and influence, while most of the American critics are concerned with the nature of the particular kind of fiction Dick wrote: its modes of operation and involvement in such matters as ethics, economics, and ideology. Only one article is devoted to a single work: John Rieder's on *The Man in the High Castle*; the other essays cite various major works of the '60s, notably *High Castle* and *The Simulacra*, and give considerable attention to the "gnostic" later works, re-evaluating texts that may not be as involved in a kind of dialogue with *sf*. Freedman finds these works "atypical of Dick's central achievement" (i.e., the famed novels of the '60s), but some of his contributors seem to find them more a culmination.

Some readers might have expected that this French/American issue would have offered perspectives on Dick from French theoretical points of view. In particular it might have been interesting to get an in-depth reading of Dick in the light of Jean Baudrillard, whose notions of the hyperreal, e.g., Disneyland as described in his *Simulations*, seem to have some ideal illustrations in Dick. But in fact, only Scott Durham's essay alludes to Baudrillard, and none of the others make direct application of French theory, though the "libidinal economy" of Deleuze and Guattari is evoked a number of times. The most conspicuous absence in the Dick issue is that of feminist perspectives; only the Daniel Fondaneche article even glancingly alludes to such a field.

What the issue does contain is of high interest. The articles from abroad give the American reader some sense of how the French perceive Dick—and how they perceive Americans' perceptions. Confronting the articles we can construct a picture of Dick's reputation in France. Evidently there has been a legend in France that Dick was neglected in the U.S. during his lifetime, and one in the U.S. that Dick is uncritically idolized in France. Roger Bozzetto argues (needlessly for the American readers) that Dick was recognized in the U.S.—i.e., by the community, which Bozzetto does not clearly distinguish from the general reading public—and that French critics have found flaws in Dick's various novels, though always taking the author himself as a "genius." We gather from Daniel Fondaneche that despite sporadic early translations, Dick's French reputation began only in 1970 with an edition of *Unleash* that through the '70s the French were enthralled by Dick's portrait of a "schizophrenic America," and by his satire of conservative political institutions and religious sects, that "The scent of May 1968 appeared to waft from his pages. The nostalgia born of a failed revolution... engendered a passion for Dick that prolonged the

dream of liberty" (p. 142). From *sf* writer Emmanuel Jouannec we also hear that Dick alienated a number of his fans in 1977, when he spoke at a conference in Metz, by espousing gnostic doctrines and raising doubts about his sanity. Jouannec cites several pre-'78 writers directly influenced by Dick, and post-'78 writers more in the tradition of the Latin Americans and the French New Novelists, but whose metafictional concerns are shared by Dick in his later works.

Of the American articles, Slusser's, which is twice as long as any of the others, has perhaps the most challenging, or debatable, points. It argues that Dick writes with a distinctively American, specifically Emersonian, perception of history not as a series of fixed points in time, with an "institutional base," but as a "pragmatic, dynamic vision" with a "fluid, ever-renewing base of Emerson's power and form" (p. 188). Slusser calls this American sense "historicity" as opposed to European history/histoire. He appears to be saying he is using his word as it is used in *High Castle*, but surely Dick's definition of "historicity" is quite different: it is the "aura" of authenticity (e.g., of FDR's Zippo lighter) that in fact is only in the eye of the beholder who believes the documentation of the object. Slusser claims that historicity in his sense is in the "mainstream" of American literature and that this current "flows naturally into SF" (p. 191) because of the genre's post-Einsteinian sense of time. Unfortunately he does not cite any authors but Dick who have the Emersonian dynamic.

Also unfortunately, Slusser uses a single European to represent all that is stodgily "traditionalist" and undynamic in perception: Alain Robbe-Grillet, who is cited as stating that a writer of today should not be praised for writing like Stendhal, for first, that is impossible, and second, to adopt a point by Borges, a writer of today who copies an old master word for word would produce a completely different work. This passage is made to do heavy duty in representing the whole European sense of fixity in time; and as for Robbe-Grillet's own novels, with their radical sense of time, they still assume, Slusser claims, that

Read This

Recently read and recommended by

George Alec Effinger:

Being on the SFWA Nebula Jury this year made me rather glum about 1988's books. There were a number of fine novels, but they are overwhelmed in my memory by the flood of crummy stuff I felt obliged to look over. There are three novels that seem special to me now:

Desolation Road, by Ian McDonald (Bantam Spectra pb), which is the kind of quirky, stylish book I'm always in the mood for, even though some sour literary types tell me it's just rewarmed Latin American magical realism. I admire an author with the *cojones* to bring the Devil onstage for a chapter in the middle of what is otherwise an SF book, not a fantasy.

Ivory, by Mike Resnick (Tor hc). Mike's not wholly accurate reputation nailed him as a dependable but not ambitious *sf* writer, even though he turned out some wows like *The Brachy* years ago. I think that reputation prevented him from getting the respect he'd earned, as well as award nominations for *Santiago* Maybe he needed that book to turn everybody's thinking around. *Ivory* will get the nominations. It's the best book I've read in a long time.

The Drive In, by Joe R. Lansdale (Bantam Spectra pb). This is what Siskel and Ebert call a guilty pleasure. It's a gross, funny, fascinating book. On the whole I have little use for horror, but something about the book worked on me real good. I didn't expect to get past the first chapter, but I read it in one sitting, staying up into the early morning hours.

outside their frame the "orderly sequence of history" still exists.

All this means, among other things, that Marxist and Freudian readings of Dick are invalid, for these European systems of thought cannot grasp the dynamics of Dickian flow. Slusser's readings of passages in *High Castle* and other Dick works are quite stimulating, as is the idea of Dick as an Emersonian writer. But Slusser's construction of America as a place of "fluid things" without institutions and monuments in the European style seems as fanciful as Dick's America in *High Castle*.

John Huntington's article imagines a very different source for the flow of contrary and contradictory events and perspectives in Dick's most challenging works. He sees Dick assiduously following A.E. van Vogt's "800-word rule" that to keep the reader's interest a writer should introduce a new idea every 800 words. Huntington unconvincingly infers Dick's allegiance to the rule simply from the fact that Dick admired the older writer. But the value of the essay is in its characterizations of the strange shifts of perspective in many of Dick's works, and its relating these shifts to questions of "authenticity and sincerity," involving Dick's ambivalent feelings about wanting to be an unabashedly entertaining pulp writer and yet a "serious" writer with "important" ideas.

Eric Rabkin's essay centers upon "rationalization" in the Marxist sense of how the capitalist workplace, or today's postindustrial apparatus, turns humans into mere machines, endlessly replicating meaningless objects or entertainments. Noting, with convincing examples, the predominance of economic metaphors in Dick's works, Rabkin examines the negative portrayal of replication in various novels, relating it to Gresham's Law of bad money driving out good. One may question, however, Rabkin's conclusion that Dick, in pursuing the "irrational" to escape constraints of rationalization, slips into madness in his later "mystical" works.

Those later works are of particular interest to Scott Durham, because they portray not only the death (glissolation) of the fictive subject but the death (or disunity) of the narrating subject as well. Writing in the language of academic critical theory, Durham first characterizes those earlier works where subject and object appear to converge: a moment which some may call a psychotic experience, where a human feels him/herself fragmenting or becoming an object, or the objective world merging with him/herself, and which Durham portrays in terms of negation and triumph of "desire" in dialectic

alternation (p. 175). He concludes with an examination of the aesthetically more radical but politically more conservative VALIS, "with its ambiguous generic and institutional status—at once sf, autobiography, and pop hermeneutic of the late-capitalist everyday—and its uneasy assimilation of the subject of delirium to the narrative subject" (p. 180). In this work's capillary "theology" he finds a parallel to the '60s counter-culture's turning "increasingly from a radically contestatory politics of experience to a quiescent, depoliticized and quasi-religious New-Ageism" (p. 182).

Political ideology, bound to the aesthetics of sf narrative, is the ultimate concern also of John Rieder, in his analysis of *High Castle*. Among its virtues this essay offers a commentary on the novel's ending in the light of what the *I Ching*'s "Inner Truth" hexagram actually says. It also gives us a Greimasian rectangle representing the novel's narrative and hermeneutic codes: the Realist Code of the everyday (real) world, the sf Code of the (unreal) Axis takeover, the Critical Code of forgeries and disguises (real but fake), and the Oracular Code (neither real nor unreal) of the *I Ching*. And it explores the political implications of the novel's tension between metaphysics—all "reality" is open to doubt—and ethics—the authentically "human" is not doubted.

It may be unfair to compare SF's Dick issue with that journal's previous Dick issues (Vol. 5, 1975) which had major contributions from F. Jameson, S. Lem and D. Suvin, not to mention a word from Dick himself. After all, that issue had the unrepeatability excitement of breaking new ground, and was not bound by a tie-in to a literary conference. But a reader of Dick studies, as well as of Dick himself, is likely to feel some disappointment with the new issue, and not only for its limited range of topics and some unevenness in the analyses. The French contributions are informative but otherwise lightweight reading: the American contributions, on the other hand, are often heavy going—affording complex insights in less than pleasurable prose. Typically, the American essays begin with trenchant, witty remarks but soon slip into one or another kind of standard academic discourse. (Exceptions include the consistently lucid and incisive prose of Freedman and Wolf, and much of Huntington and Rieder). Still, this issue does signify as a cross-oceanic celebration of *Le Maître du Haut Coboliteu*.

Joseph Militia teaches at the University of Wisconsin in Sheboygan.

Women of Vision edited by Denise Du Pont

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988; \$14.95 hc; 163 pp.

reviewed by Gwyneth Jones

A slim volume this, to serve as a "celebration of the achievements" of women writing science fiction. And slim as it is, a good deal of space is given over to gracefully arranged bibliographies and biographical notes. The essays themselves run to only 2,500 words or less, and some of them are very slight. Rather than a celebration, maybe it should be regarded as a taster, a sampler: glimpses and snippets from the works and lives of several interesting women, some of them very well known in the sf field; others less so. It is difficult to know where to place a study of this kind: in a sense, *Women of Vision* seems to fall somewhere between a very long magazine article and a sketch for an academic treatise. I feel I would have liked the final composition to have leaned a little further towards the academic, in bite and in depth. I would have liked a more substantial contribution from the editor, who takes a very modest bow in the brief introduction and then disappears forever. I'd have liked to know how contributors were selected (why no Kate Wilhelm? Joanna Russ? Octavia Butler? C.J. Cherryh...?). I would have liked to know what answers Ms. Du Pont would have come up with herself to the three questions each contributor was asked to answer (Why do you write? What were the obstacles—or benefits—you encountered as a woman writer? Why do you write in the genre(s) you have chosen?) If this is a serious study and not a magazine article, modesty is out of place. Readers have a right to assume that the editor has strong opinions on her chosen subject, and the editor's opinions are always interesting; after all if it

weren't for them there would (presumably) be no book.

As it stands, there seems to be something a little disingenuous in Du Pont's claim that the book is inspired by the fact that "women are entering the genre in increasing numbers." As some of her contributors point out, there have been women writing sf as long as the genre has been around; and probably encountering less resistance than in, say, science itself. At the same time, there have always been women in every field to whom prejudice doesn't matter because they are just so good they don't have to see it. The past twenty years have seen women doing a lot of things they didn't do before; maybe today they don't all have to be so enormously talented to succeed. If there has been a rush into the writing of sf (and fantasy) which is measurable as distinct from this effect, then that's worth some discussion. If not, then Du Pont's book is exactly what she hopes it isn't: another addition to the mythology that says any kind of competence in a woman is interesting per se, nobody has to explain why. Now there are, of course, plenty of women writers even in sf who are happy to explain why...who have put a great deal of thought into their identity as women writers, the plight of women in this world and in the future. But there are others who see nothing to explain, and it is those writers who have been rather ill-served in this collection. The request to "talk about what it means to be a woman writer" forces Marion Zimmer Bradley into a defensive, combative position towards certain other women writers—which can hardly have been the editor's intention in this "celebra-

tion"—and there are others who seem fairly uncomfortable. Superficially it might seem invidious to restrict the opinions sought in a study of this kind to those of avowed feminists, but in fact that's the only rational way to put together a book about women writers that isn't—individually—just about the fact that they are women. One question that's inevitably brought to mind is where is the collection of essays by male writers telling how their gender affects their writing? This is not a rhetorical question, I'd really like to see that book. But one preselected for men who were prepared to consider their gender significant would probably be a very slim volume indeed.

For better or for worse, the matter of gender overshadows the other two topics raised, and aside from a few uncomfortable negatives we're offered a wide range of positive responses. But some of the most positive in the sense of being most forceful leave me a little uneasy. Ursula Le Guin takes arms against the male-dominated heroic story and puts forward in its place the "carrier bag theory of civilization": the womb in place of the phallus as humanity's central icon. At the heart of the late Alice Sheldon's writing there was always a deep bitterness against man's inhumanity—to women, to each other, to the natural world. There is an appealing simplicity in this viewpoint—that men are simply to blame for everything—but it doesn't leave much rational basis for a positive feminist attitude. The question becomes, where were all the women while this long reign of terror was going on? Where are they now as it continues? Where was Ursula? If the division between bad men and good women, bad masculine and good feminine, is as clear as Le Guin and Sheldon seem to want to claim,

then the good is terminally incompetent. And this does indeed seem to have been Alice Sheldon's belief. Maybe there's more hope for us if we admit to some guilt, some illicit profiting from the whole corrupt operation.

It goes without saying that Le Guin and Sheldon are writers of considerable stature, and that shows even in their contributions to this slight collection. Still, arguing by absolutes, though it makes poetic rhetoric, always has a tendency to lead to absurdity. Other contributors have been content with a lower tone, which is actually more telling: Joan D. Vinge simply states "it's still hard for a woman to combine writing with bringing up a family"; Patricia Hodgell discusses with admirable clarity and candor the development of her alter ego, the fantasy heroine as Daddy's girl tomboy; Pamela Sargent uncovers her painful past. But significantly, the longest and most thoughtful essay in the book comes from Suzy McKee Charnas. Of all the contributors, Charnas is the one who gives space and genuine analytical attention to the process of writing itself, as she experiences it. Her description of this experience—speaking as another writer—is fascinating. It's ruthless, offhand, completely individual; and the feminism involved is given the same calmly rigorous dissection as the question of how do you make up a character. It's this piece that makes me wish Du Pont had either cut down the list of contributors or asked for longer essays. The bibliographies might have had to go into small print, but the book would have been better for it.

Gwyneth Jones is the author of *Kairos* and *Divine Endurance*.

Journey to Fusang by William Sanders

New York: Questar Fantasy/Popular Library, Sept., 1988; \$3.95; 310 pp.

reviewed by Loren J. MacGregor

In the traditional alternate-world novel, a character from the present is thrust into the historical past. Thus stranded, the time-traveler makes the best of a bad situation, and (depending on his or her knowledge and the inclinations of the writer) sets about making the past as much like the present as possible. Each change made causes this alternate past to diverge more and more from true history, in a synergistic ripple effect effectively demonstrated by logical thought and rigorous historical research. Properly done, such stories are often a pleasant alternative to a standard historical romance.

Journey to Fusang ain't one of them; it's in a class entirely by itself. If you start from Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, veer left at Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and continue on through the Fleischers' *Koko the Clown*, you'll have a general idea of the kind of inspired madness Sanders deals in. Frequently bawdy, always brash, he's constantly about twenty yards ahead and shouting for you to keep up.

If you can imagine a pun or dumb joke involving any popular character from literature, Sanders has probably thrown it in. Then, as if to see whether you're paying attention, he throws in a line from history which is as accurate as it is funny—assuming you have tastes as low as mine. For example: When Finn comes upon a vast Indian camp, much larger than anticipated, he comments, "As the page said to Richard the Lionhearted, I was unprepared for the size of it."

It isn't that Sanders hasn't done the proper research, but that the results are—well, skewed. If he mentions an historical event, it is true and can be checked. If he cites a language—and there are many, from Gaelic to Latin to Arabic to Chinese to Apache to Russian—his citations are accurate, if always irrelevant. And Sanders doesn't let historical accuracy stand in the way of a good joke, or even a bad one. ("My own steed," says Finn, "was a large, long-legged beast with a sad expression and a long upper lip that made him look remarkably like a picture I had once seen of the King of the Franks, so I called him Francis. He was a surprisingly intelligent creature, and at times I almost fancied he could talk if he wanted to.")

Essentially, this novel takes place in a world in which Christian Europe was overrun by the Mongol hordes, and as a result the Holy See is in Ireland, the entire British Isles have been isolated for centuries, and the Arab world controls the Atlantic Coast of the United States while the Chinese control the Pacific. Aztecs still rule in Mexico, and

do a brisk trade in slaves to be used as human sacrifices—sort of mobile, living, temporary heart-lung machines. Into all this chaos rides the Wandering Finn, a conman of no mean reputation. With Ireland out of the question ("And how was I to know she was the High King's own daughter?" he asks plaintively at the beginning of the book. "Besides, she swore she was fifteen.") and the East Coast unsafe for a man of his inclinations, Finn sets out across country for the far-fabled west coast land of Fusang where the streets run with gold and the seven hills of the city of Halping overshadow a vast, pellucid bay near which Roundeye Town offers hundreds of tiny quaint Caucasian eateries and the white-skinned immigrants (whose sexual prowess and athletic abilities are legendary) wash clothes, run brothels, and engage in brutal, poorly understood gang wars throughout the colorful native bars and tiny greasy-spoon diners...

It sounds confused and chaotic; it is. But Sanders makes it work with the panache of a sidewalk raconteur. It's as if he were watching you, one eyebrow raised, and saying, "Is it that you're doubting what I'm telling you?" After a time I was no longer surprised at what Sanders threw in but at what he left out, and what he left out was very little.

One thing was evident early on, and after a time it became annoying, like the mosquito in your ear just before you fall asleep—the one which won't go away. There is no strict chronological history in this book, nor is there intended to be any. Shakespeare is contemporary with the Wild West which is contemporary with 16th century Mexico which is, for all I know, contemporary with the Upper Paleolithic and Heinlein's "The Year of the Jackpot." After a time (the pun seems at the moment unavoidable) I desperately wanted Sanders to settle down to one consistent era, to follow up on some of the tantalizing details he so casually dropped; by the end of the book I felt as if I'd been endlessly snacking on hors d'oeuvres, and I wanted a full meal.

Fusang, like *Tom Jones* before it, depends on breathless action and split second timing; it has the tippy appeal of an 18th century knockabout farce. I enjoyed it, yes; if I cavil at all it is because the book hovers on the edge of being a first-rate fantasy novel, and settles instead for being merely very good.

Loren MacGregor is the author of *The Net*. He lives in San Francisco, California.

An Interview with Theodore Sturgeon

Continued from page 1

do you have the particular freedom of expression that you have in science fiction. Most especially now that the whole sex bit has been kicked down and the barriers no longer exist. And, incidentally, I will say this, that by and large specific sex is handled in science fiction in a more mature and more balanced way than in almost any other area. People are still tiptoeing up against it very gently, or they are boldly overdoing it—mama died 17 years ago, you know, but they're going to get even with mama in some way or other so they're gonna write this real horny copy...

DGH: You've said that love is the principle theme of practically everything you've ever written. Have you ever written anything in which it wasn't?

TS: No, except that my preoccupation in a larger sense is the optimum man. The question of establishing an internal ecology, where the optimum liver works with the optimum spleen and the optimum eyeball and so forth. Now when you get to the mind—not the brain, but the optimum mind—then you have the whole inner space idea, my conviction is that there's more room there than there is in outer space, in each individual being. Love of course has a great deal to do with that, as a necessary coloration and adjunct to everything that we do—to love oneself, to love the parts of oneself, to love the interaction of the parts of oneself, and then the interaction of that whole organism with those of another person. Which is as good a definition of love as you can get, I think.

But it has been my preoccupation, the optimum person. My stories are almost invariably—this was pointed out to me, incidentally, years later, only about eight years ago did I find this out myself, by somebody very astute who had read more Sturgeon than I have... it seemed like it anyhow. He pointed out to me that up until 1940, my stories were what he called "entertainments," which is a perfectly respectable thing for stories to be. But then there was a hiatus for nearly six years, in which I wrote nothing except "Kilddozer"—I wrote "Kilddozer" in nine days right in the middle of that period, in 1943. But the stories after that have all been with this preoccupation with the optimum man. He called them, essentially, "therapy" stories. They were about people who knew what they wanted and tried to get it, or who didn't know what they wanted, and the essence of the story was what it was that they were trying to get. Some didn't know what it was and had to find out. Some people had it and lost it, and so on; but there was always this concept of the optimum person, the person who used all of his faculties, and that peculiar unknown part of the mind—it's been called anywhere from two-thirds to nine-tenths of the brain, actually—which seems not to be used.

DGH: It seems to me, then, that stories like—well, not only *Mow Than Human*, which is obviously one of your central works, but something like "Maturity."

TS: Just so. As a matter of fact, "Maturity" is the blueprint for this whole thing I've been talking about. "Maturity" as it appears in a book (*Without Sorcery*, Prime Press, 1948) and in subsequent collections, is not the same as the one that appeared in the magazine (*Astounding Science Fiction*, February, 1947). The very purpose of that first collection, from Jim Williams of Prime Press in Philadelphia, an outfit long extinct now, was to be able to rewrite "Maturity." Because I was intensely dissatisfied with it. If I hadn't had the book I wouldn't have had the chance to rewrite that story, and that's what I wanted to do.

Do you remember the name of the hero of "Maturity"? It was Robin, Robin English. Well, when my first son was born, I called him Robin, because he was going to be the second rewrite. I was dissatisfied with the second one too. What I was looking for was a definition of maturity, and here I was going to have this boy baby, if indeed it turned out to be a boy baby, and I really meant for him to be my second rewrite. In other words, he was going to instruct me about what maturity is. Well, Robin's twenty years old now; and he's given me a pretty good definition of it. He's a fine, mature kid, he really is, and I'm very pleased with him. But he was the second rewrite of that story.

But that has been my preoccupation, the optimum human being...

By the way, I don't want to get too far away from the subject of science fiction as such, but I've just come back from Arcata where I spent a week at the symposium on creativity that was put on by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and it was an intensely interesting experience. I went up there with certain preconceptions which turned out to be, I think, quite wrong. I don't think the guy is after a personality cult, I think he really tries to discourage that. And the other thing that I was quarreling about was his sort of "render unto Caesar" idea, okay go to Vietnam, okay don't smoke pot, okay, pay your income taxes and so on, which struck me as very, very Establishment and "Let's not quarrel with the authorities."

DGH: Sounds like a very Western idea, matter of fact.

TS: In a way it is, but, you see what he's after, apparently—now, mind you, I don't really know too much about it, I'm getting some more literature, and I'm going to study up on it to find out really what it's about, but from what I've been able to discover up there what he's after is the same thing, it's the optimum human being.

And transcendental meditation apparently is a means of increasing the ability to communicate with your own inner levels. There are levels within us which do not communicate well with the rest. In a speech I made up there, I cited Simeon's book, *Man's Presumptuous Brain*, in which he lays on virtually all the troubles that humanity has, on the fact that the white brain is ancient, and totally efficient, and geared only to your survival—it's what makes your heart beat, and your breath go, and it's what makes you snatch your hand away from a hot stove lid. And it's in the survival business, and it knows what it's doing. And it's overridden by a very recent acquisition, this grey brain. And it mistrusts it, because the grey brain can change its mind, which the white brain does not do. Let's say here you have a wall of flame, and something precious behind it, you can run through that wall of flame and go get it. Well the white brain is absolutely in a panic at that kind of thing.

DGH: Is this a physiological, or a metaphysical distinction?

TS: Both. And it is true that the grey brain can override the white brain, and make it do things that the white brain in just does not like doing. Every high-board diver takes some kind of a toll on himself by overcoming the reluctance of the white brain to fling itself off a high place. And there's this kind of friction all the time. And the white brain cannot reason, and it cannot learn the distinction between the jungle that for millions of years, literally, it's been familiar with, one jungle or another, and the kind of monetary, or status jungle that the grey brain finds itself in. The white brain can't begin to understand these things. And Simeon has the idea that most diseases are psychogenic, caused by the friction between these two opposed brains unable to understand one another or come to terms with one another.

Even forms of cancer he considers are psychogenic in that they come from stress, and the stress comes from the friction between these two brains. The cortex and the diencephalon. And meditation seems to be a technique for establishing communication between these two brains. And really, the white brain—all it needs to do, somebody once described it as a highly intelligent dog thoroughly trained in the operation of a Mark 12 computer—and it just wants to be patted, and told that it's loved, and that it's appreciated. It wants to be acknowledged. It doesn't know how to ask for it, it doesn't know how to establish lines of communication, but it does want to be acknowledged.

Now, back to Maharishi—well, he has military men up there, and says that whatever meditation can do for them, it can make them do everything they do better than they do it now. Which is a pretty terrifying thought. But I think what he's after is to create thousands, and hundreds of thousands, and millions of human beings who are in communication with their inner selves, and who are biologically, have the cerebral cortex IN COMMUNICATION with the diencephalon. And who therefore become more optimum people. He feels that optimum people are not going to have property conflicts, and they are not going to have wars, and they are not going to become transcended with greed... and so, instead of saying "war is a bad thing, let us stop where the war is," he's saying essentially, "war is an affliction of human beings who are not working properly. Let us make them work properly." And that really seems to be the answer to why he seems to be an establishment cat. Basically he's not, he's working in another area, and

it takes a little difficulty to understand that.

I gotta give you this quick word picture, incidentally—we went out to the Maharishi's house, after I spoke that night, and the next day we went out there, and it was misty all the way up the Pacific Coast, with these breakers pounding on these huge rocks up the shore, and it was misty out to sea, but out there at that house of his the sun was shining brightly, it was shining the whole time we were there, it was eerie. And they were singing the vedas, the mantras, he had a couple of hindu monks singing and two pundits listening and there was an old man with a white beard whose function I don't quite know except he seemed to be sitting, watching the whole thing as it was done. Maharishi's sitting there at his throne of flowers with his eyes closed; it was a very, very compelling thing, people just clustered all over the floor, listening, and out at sea the mist and the surf pounding, and seals barking—it was an unforgettable thing, it really was.

II. Waldo to Sturgeon

DGH: When you were just beginning to write your "entertainments" and before, what were you reading?

TS: I was reading H. G. Wells and Lord Dunsany, and the pre-Raphaelites, whom I absolutely adored as a 13-14 year old kid. I was so caught up in William Morris and the Rossetis, and Thomas de Quincy, and that was the whole area that I was most deeply soaked in. I loved that stuff. It was poetic and it was cadenced and it was full of color and it was—you know, the magic land of Somewhere Else. And I guess maybe I wasn't particularly happy where I was, and so I leapt at the chance to be somewhere else as often as possible.

DGH: Where were you?

TS: Oh, I was the product of a divorce—my father stopped coming around to the house except on weekends when I was about four, and that went on till I was about seven or so. And then he just disappeared altogether—I don't mean he disappeared. He continued to be the father, it was support and so forth and so on. They ultimately became divorced when I was about nine, eight I suppose, and then for a year or so my mother was carrying the freight pretty much. She was a publicity woman for a newspaper—in the trade paper part of the movie industry in New York. She used to be a columnist for them, and she was a freelance writer, who never sold very much stuff at all freelancing. But she was a marvelous publicity woman. She was very good. She was a highly talented person, a painter and poet and actress, and she used to read aloud to us a lot. She had wonderful vocal facilities. She used to be able to change her voice all the time when she read aloud so it gave you a very professional quality.

DGH: It's a fine experience. My mother read to us when we were small.

TS: Yes, it is great. And we covered a tremendous amount of different things. And then my stepfather came into the picture, and he was a professor of languages. She was dead set against men in general and husbands in particular. She had had it, but he was extremely persistent and finally married her when I was ten. And we moved to Philadelphia, where he became the head of the modern languages department of Drexel University, which is now known as Drexel Tech in Philadelphia, and that was in the fall of 1929 when everything went crash, and it was a rather fortunate thing for us because people on steady salaries with some kind of established tenure at that time were in a very fortunate position, when everything else was falling apart. And we went to school in the Philadelphia school system. Due to his pressure, I skipped two and a half years of my primary schooling. I left the fifth grade and took eight weeks in summer school and went to high school at not quite twelve years old. I never was in the seventh grade or the eighth grade. I went right from the fifth grade on to high school. And I was very underweight and undersized and a natural target for everyone around me. And I was pretty well brutalized by that whole thing. We didn't have school buses in those days and we lived three miles away and we used to have these six miles to walk every day through all kinds of neighborhoods. I had to figure out different ways to go each day, because kids would lay for me on the way. I had curly golden hair and I was very thin and kid of waxy-faced and—pretty. And I was just an absolute target. When I was in high school I discovered apparatus gymnastics, and that became my total preoc-

cupation. In a year and a half or so I gained four inches and sixty pounds, and I became captain and manager of my gym team, which is literally a transfiguration. I was totally born again. And the very kids that used to bully me used to follow me around and carry my books and it was a really incredible difference. And then when I was fifteen I came down with acute rheumatic fever. By this time I had a two-year scholarship already at Temple University, an athletic scholarship, and my whole life was blueprinted. I was going to get my degree in physical education and spend a year teaching, and then I was going down to Florida and join Barnum & Bailey Circus and become a flyer. However, acute rheumatic fever and six months flat on my back took care of that. It was a shattering experience, because I didn't know what else to do with my life. I was going to be a flyer with Barnum & Bailey's, that's all, that was it. And suddenly I wasn't going to be anything of the sort, no more gymnastics, ever. I had a fantastic enlargement of my heart—sixteen percent. It was so enlarged that pericardium, it squirted up between my ribs and you could see it beating from the outside. But inside of the year or so, I did such a fantastic recovery that I passed a physical that—2,800 kids applied for eighteen openings in a Pennsylvania State Nautical School, and I passed that physical by not telling them that I had any heart disorder. And I became a cadet on a school ship. I did a year at that and then I ran away to sea. Then I had papers to let me be an ordinary seaman. And it was at that time, when I was about seventeen, that I began to write.

DGH: What prompted you to do it?

TS: Greed.

DGH: Aha! Were you writing for the pulps?

TS: No. I worked out a way to rob the American Express Company out of several hundred thousand dollars. And I did my homework, and I wrote to the American Express Company and I found out precisely how they shipped this and that and the other thing. I got it all worked out and I wrote it as a story because I didn't quite have the guts to do it myself. I sold it to a newspaper syndicate, and there was a check waiting for me when I got up north—this was after, I don't know, about six trips where the letters had been going back and forth and I was gradually working this thing out—I worked terribly hard on that story. The check was for five dollars. But that so excited me that I went ashore, and then for the next seven months or so I lived on that newspaper syndicate. They wouldn't buy more than two stories a week, and I wrote one and sometimes two stories a week, and I got five and sometimes ten dollars a week. They didn't take everything I gave them either. They bounced some of them.

DGH: What name did you publish under?

TS: My name, Theodore Sturgeon. Oh! That whole business of the name! I met a Waldo, and had kind of an interesting family that went back... Peter Waldo was a dissident priest in the 15th century who got hold of the dumb idea that perhaps the Pope in Rome ought to go back to the vows of poverty and obedience and get rid of the chain mail and the Swiss Guards and the jewel-encrusted cross and so on, and put on a monk's habit and go out among the people. And the Pope took a very dim view of that indeed, and they persecuted the Waldenses all across Europe for 200 years. And they persecuted them viciously.

DGH: Of course! The Waldensian Heresy!

TS: Yes, that was the Waldensian Heresy, that you should go back to Apostolic Christianity. Nobody wanted to go and do a thing like that. And they settled in Flanders, and in Holland, and in England, and in 1640 two ships of them decided to go to the new world. And they got separated by a storm, and one of them went to Connecticut. There are still Waldos in Connecticut to this day. The other ship went far south, and a wound up of all places in Haiti. Well, Haiti in 1640 was already a refuge for runaway slaves, and when they found they had a shipload of dissident priests they welcomed them with open arms. Waldo became corrupted to Vaudois, which is the etymology of the word "voodoo"... There's been a whole line of "gurus," you know, in my family. Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of them. Samuel Taylor Waldo was a person of great renown at one time. But anyway, as I say, I was born a Waldo, my brother was Peter Waldo, named after that same one, and I was named after my father, Edward. And when my mother remarried, my name was changed—my stepfather legally adopted us, because as a prominent figure in Philadelphia education he didn't want

his kids in high school with one name while he had another, and questions being asked. People were stuffy in those days. So he legally adopted us. The "Theodore" came from the fact that my mother never wanted me called "Eddie" because they called my father Eddie, and she was still carrying some resentments. Theodore, however—I was always Ted, and Theodore would make it Ted and not Eddie ever. So that's how it became Theodore Sturgeon.

When Jim Williams published *Without Sorcery*, he called me up one day and said, did you ever have any other name but Theodore Sturgeon? And I gave him this whole long story about the divorce and the adoption and so forth and so on, and he says uh huh, uh huh, and he was just as ignorant as I was only I didn't know that. So he writes all this stuff onto the copyright application; and so therefore "Theodore Sturgeon" winds up as a pseudonym, and in libraries the world over, literally, the world over, if you look up Sturgeon you are referred to Waldo. And if they don't happen to have that cross filing, then my books cannot be found in library catalogs. It happens that our friend Glen-Wright [co-director of Clarion East—eds.]—he's been engaged for the last two years and will be for at least another three in compiling a catalog of every pseudonym in American literature ever since there was an American literature. And it looks like he's the guy who's going to be able to straighten this out, and start the automation in the other direction, and get Sturgeon books back in the library. I'll never know what this has cost me in my literary career, because who knows how many producers or whatnot have been looking for my books and been referred to Waldo and found no listing there?

DGH: When you were writing those syndicated stories, I presume those stories were science fiction or fantasy, or were they?

TS: No, although just a few months ago a woman who owned a house where I rented an apartment once got a message through my agent that she had been clearing out the attic and there was a whole box of my stuff there and did I want to see it? And so I sent for it, and it's got a lot of those stories—I haven't had a chance to go through them yet. Some of them are kind of cute—a lot of them are boy meets girl type things. Somebody once told me about the old sailing skipper, with this huge storm coming up, his mates say to him, New Orleans God-fearing

tea schooners and so on: "Captain, you'd better shorten sail!" And the Captain says, "If the Lord wants me to shorten sail, he'll blow some off!" And take off and write a story about that kind of situation. And about the girl who catches her man by, there's something so compelling about her and he never can figure out what it is, and the gimmick is that in the lobes of her ears and the crooks of her elbows and a little bit on her breastbone she's putting extract of vanilla instead of... and every time he gets near her he thinks about cookies and yellow curtains in the kitchen and so on. And she nails him that way. [David laughs.] And there's all kinds of gimmicks like that I would use. Short-stories are a very difficult form to write, and it always takes off from some little concept like that and so a lot of the stories are like that, and I'll have to go through them again and see if any of them were actually science fiction or fantasy.

III. *Unknown, Astounding*. Campbell: Sturgeon discovers the field.

TS: Well, somebody brought me a volume 1, number 1 of *Unknown* and said, boy, this is what you should be writing. I was about eighteen at the time. [He was just twenty-one.] Cause I'd talked to him a lot and he knew that was my schtick, and I remember H. L. Gold's "Trouble with Water" was in volume 1, number 1, and was it Dark something... "Sinister Barrier," Eric Frank Russell. I was absolutely thrilled with the magazine. And somebody suggested that I go up and see Campbell. Well, you know, I was overawed, and so I wrote a little story and took it up to him, and he pointed out to me how that wasn't a story at all—it didn't have the structure of a story—but he told me to come back and see him again, and so I wrote a story called "Ether Breather," and that was my first sale to him. The first one to appear was in *Unknown*, "A God in the Garden;" they were written about the same time. And I produced just enormously in those eighteen months, two years or so, I produced dozens of stories. One time *Unknown* and *Astounding* were on the stands together with two stories of mine in each, and in the same month, and the only reason I ever went to another market at that time at all was that John tipped me off gently that the front office was complaining a bit. Not complaining, but asking

THE TRANSYLVANIAN READING LIST, PART II: The 13 Most Important Vampire Short Stories compiled by Greg Cox

In issue #5 of this magazine, I presented a list of the most important vampire novels of all time, based on the reading I did for an upcoming book. That list, however, only told half of the story; vampire fiction began with a short story, and indeed there have been entire decades in which the best and most interesting examples of the genre appeared in magazines and anthologies devoted to short fiction.

Most notably:

"The Vampire," by John Polidori, 1819. A bit creaky, but the eponymous Lord Ruthven is still the original blood-sucking aristocrat.

"La Morte Amoureuse," by Theophile Gautier, 1839. Ironic tale of a vampiress who may not be as bad as she's made out. Better known as "Clarimonde" and definitely ahead of its time.

"Camilla," by J. Sheridan Le Fanu, 1839. The first of a long line of lesbian vampires, and an enduring masterpiece of erotic horror.

"Mrs. Amworth," by E. P. Benson, 1920. The vampire as middle-aged matron in a sleepy English town. Unusually eerie because of its lack of Gothic trappings.

"Shambleau," by C. L. Moore, 1933. The first great extra-terrestrial vampire, in a tale that blends space opera with stylish perversity.

"Over the River," by P. Schuyler, 1941. Possibly the first story told from a vampire's point of view, and still one of the most beautifully written.

"Homecoming," by Ray Bradbury, 1946. Award-winning story of the only mortal child in a family of vampires. Unforgettable.

"The Girl With the Hungry Eyes," by Fritz Leiber, 1949. The classic story of psychic vampirism. Reprinted at least three times last year.

"Drink My Red Blood," by Richard Matheson, 1951. Creepy story about a little boy who wants to be a vampire when he grows up; sort of the flip side to "Homecoming." Also published as "Drink My Blood" and "Blood Son."

"My Dear Emily," by Joanna Russ, 1962. A subversively pro-vampire story that pumped new life into the classic, Gothic vampire.

"The Lady of the House of Love," by Angela Carter, 1979. A revisionist fairy tale that proves that being a vampire princess isn't nearly as much fun as you'd think.

"Down Among the Dead Men," by Gardner Dozois and Jack Dann, 1982. Vampires in a Nazi concentration camp. Powerful and disturbing.

"Bite-Me-Not," by Tanith Lee, 1984. Arguably, the most effective of the author's many vampire stories. Sort of "Romeo and Juliet" meets "The Masque of the Red Death"—with fangs.

why we were writing so many checks to Sturgeon? The checks were a half cent a word, on pub, and a bonus of 1/4 cent a word if the story was the best in the issue. So you'd get your extra quarter of a cent. And the checks were always delayed. And the other magazines were coming up at the time, *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, and so on, and gradually I got to know all those editors.

DGH: Were you reading the magazines?

TS: Oh yeah, voraciously. And I met some interesting people at that time too—one time a little kid, literally in short pants come to see me, he was a—not short pants, in knickers—he was a student in City College in New York, and his name was Philip Klass. And he'd heard that—I used to hang out in a place called Martin's 57th Street Cafeteria, it was an all-night cafeteria, where all kinds of bums and weirdos used to hang out and talk all night, and they'd drink the ketchup and eat the sugar, nobody had any money whatsoever, could make nurse one cup of coffee all night long and pay a nickel and go out, y'know. And there were all kinds of very interesting conversations that developed in Martin's 57th Street Cafeteria. And Phil had heard from somebody that there was a writer who lived in the neighborhood and he came to see me. And then I met a striving young writer who had never publishing anything by the name of Judith Merrill and I met Phil before the war, and yeah, that was around 1939 or 1940. I went off to the West Indies before the war started, and I was running a hotel in Jamaica when the war broke out.

DGH: Well I know that about this time, as you'd said, you stopped writing. Why?

TS: Well, the tropics is funny. The sun's going to shine tomorrow the way it's shining today, and you can put it off; and also I was running a hotel and I was extremely busy, I'd been very recently married and had a baby by that time, and I don't know, it just got lost. But anyway, I couldn't write successfully in the tropics, I had one more session of that, in the late 50's, when I went down to the West Indies again, and again the same thing happened. And I will never go down to the West Indies again, or any tropical climate like that, without an assured income of some sort, because really it terrifies me, something clicks off as soon as I go down there and I don't know what it is or whether that indeed is it, perhaps it was some other surrounding circumstance, but I wouldn't risk it again.

Well anyway, when I came back, I was divorced about that time, and this is one of the reasons that the writing was shot, and then the whole thing fell apart. Besides, I was intensely immature at the time, and my wife Dorothy was mature, she was one of these people who was mature when she was twelve, and it just got too much for her, it really did, and I don't blame her a bit. Anyway I fell apart, and it was a shattering blow to me and I turned into a kind of a zombie, from the time I came back in late '44 until about 1946 when I started to write again. And if it hadn't been for a guy called L. Jerome Stanton, I don't know if I would have survived at all, really.

Stanton had an apartment on 8th Avenue with no furniture in it, and I had a whole warehouse full of furniture, so I moved my furniture into his place, and I just did anything he suggested...you know, take the stuff out to the laundry or do the shopping or cook the dinner or something until it was done and then I just stopped, like a switch had been thrown, until he said to do something else. You know, I was really in a zombieish condition.

And then I went to see John again, and I started spending a lot

A Biographical Dictionary of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists

by Robert Weinberg.

Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988. \$49.95 hc.

reviewed by Neil Barron

"Neglected though the work of these artists may be, their contribution to science fiction is immeasurable. Between them, they evolved a new idiom, a blend of smashing action, bizarre atmosphere and berserk objects, which stimulated a youthful reader just as much as the accompanying text." That's Brian Aldiss in the introduction to his *Science Fiction Art*, 1975, an oversize paperback, lamely out of print, which would serve as an excellent and colorful companion to Weinberg's unillustrated directory.

Prince Dracula: Son of the Devil by Douglas Myles

New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988; \$18.95, hc; 288 pp.

reviewed by Greg Cox

"With the emptying of the janissaries' testicles into the bowels of the young prince the fate of a vast multitude was inexorably sealed."

Not only was this sentence, which occurs three pages into Myles' book, enough to make a hardened slush reader's jaw drop in astonishment, its memorable mixture of sheer tackiness (the emptying testicles) and historical grandiosity (the fate of the vast multitude) neatly conveys the puzzling, Jekyll/Hyde quality of this curious volume.

Indeed, I originally had trouble figuring out, on a very rudimentary level, what sort of book *Prince Dracula* was supposed to be. Fiction or non-fiction? A legitimate biography of the historical Dracula, Vlad the Impaler, or a novel based on the life of...? What we have here, in fact, is a straightforward, apparently well-documented biography of Dracula, intercut with dramatizations of the more lurid moments in his life. The frequent shifts in tone and style, from reasoned commentary on the politics of 15th century Europe to stilted novelistic prose, are more than a little jarring. A torrid sex scene between Dracula and his mistress, for example, is followed by an earnest, scholarly discussion as to whether such a mistress ever existed.

One suspects that the author (or publisher) was afraid that readers would be disappointed by a "Draculus" book that didn't contain the requisite gore and eroticism. This may be so, but in the process they have produced a book that is neither fish nor fowl, wolf nor bat, and done a serious disservice to Myles' own research. Diehard vampire fans are not going to be satisfied with some sporadic scenes of sodomy and torture, while these fictionalized excesses throw doubt on the book's credibility as a reputable biography.

Prince Dracula ends up (dare I say it?) impaled upon its own mixed messages.

of time out at John's house, I was able to be useful to him out there, and gradually I began to write again, and finally I wrote a story called "The Chromium Helmet" in John's cellar out in Westfield, New Jersey, and that was really the first of these so-called "therapeutic" or optimum humanity stories. And they just went on from there. Unknown never came back, and I began writing for other markets, and so on. In 1947 I had my first collection, with Jim Williams, and then I went to work for Time Incorporated and I got married again and that one didn't last very long, that was a bad pitch, and finally, let me see it was, I guess 1950, '52 I got married, to Marion, and I was married to Marion for seventeen years, and we raised these four nice kids, they were really good.

The second half of this interview will appear in the next issue.

emphasis is understandable. Less forgivable is his deliberate omission of "children's artists and early fantasy artists, such as Arthur Rackham, whose names were primarily associated with children's literature." Many of these illustrators tower above their pulp counterparts, and I would have hoped for at least brief entries for some of the better-known, such as Rackham, Edmund Dulac, Jack Nielson, Maxfield Parrish, W. W. Denslow, etc. Yet he finds room for non-entities like Clifford Geary, who illustrated Heinlein's Scribner juveniles.

Equally regrettable is the omission of most European illustrators, whose work is far more heavily influenced by fine art traditions. The only illustrator to have shared an Academy Award for set design, the Swiss H. R. Giger, has no entry, nor does Karel Thole, who's had a collection of his work published in Italy and Germany. And how about M. C. Escher's fascinating geometrical work?

The core of the book (269 pages) are the biographies of 250+ illustrators, most of them written by Weinberg, with help from Richard Dalby, Mike Ashley and Phil Harbottle for British and French entries. Much of this information has never appeared in print (or at best as fragments in moldering pulps), and that's the major value of this directory, although few fans will make much use of the information.

I spot-checked the entries for relative completeness within the self-imposed limits. Of the 36 illustrators who have been nominated for or won a Hugo, as listed in the chapter on SF illustration in my *Anatomy of Wonder* (1987), two were omitted: Vaughan Bode (cited twice in the index) and Val Lackey Lindahn. British illustrator Rodney Mathews, who illustrated many Moorcock works and several calendars, is absent. The best known illustrator for Burroughs, J. Allen St. John, is praised in the overview but doesn't get an entry. Neither does the contemporary British illustrator, Brian Proud, who had a Pescok Press/Bantam collection of his work in 1977. If Gahan Wilson is included, why not Edward Gorey?

The entries themselves provide a chronological survey of the career with some attempt to describe the "look" of the illustrator's work. Each entry concludes with a list of hardcover and paperback

books and magazines illustrated. There are some significant omissions in these lists. The outstanding and only collection of Boris Artzybasheff's work, *As I See* (1954), is omitted, as is *Richard Corben: Flight Into Fantasy* (1981). Joseph Mugaini's work was collected in his *JM: Drawings and Graphics* (1982). There is no mention of *Harry Clarke: His Graphic Art* by Nicola Gordon Bowe (1983).

Following the entries is an interesting chapter on what survives of the original illustrations. Not much, at least for most older pulp illustrators, who sold all rights to their work and rarely had the originals returned. The situation today has dramatically improved. A list of Hugo and World Fantasy Awards, a deficient bibliography and a name/title index conclude the book.

Weinberg's introduction notes that there have been some books on SF illustration but mistakenly claims that the "only worthwhile art books were a limited number of collections, each focusing on the work of an individual artist." At least a few surveys are worth the reader's and viewer's time: Aldiss (cited above), whose knowledge of art is far wider than Weinberg's; Anthony Frewin's *One Hundred Years of SF Illustration, 1840-1940* (1975); Jacques Sadoul's *2000 A.D.: Illustration from the Golden Age of Science Fiction Pulp* (1973; trans. 1975), and Thomas Bonin's *Under Cover: An Illustrated History of American Mass Market Paperbacks* (1982). These and a few similar works should be described (only Aldiss is in the bibliography) because they are extensively illustrated in color and b&w, quite apart from their useful texts. How can, say, one imagine Bergey's magnificent tawdriness without a reproduction or two?

Weinberg and his helpers have done pulp enthusiasts a favor by unearthing a lot of information about illustrators, most of whom would otherwise be consigned to deteriorating or vanishing pulps or the memories of a few aging fans. For this audience I can recommend this pricey directory, but only the largest libraries need consider. ▶

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***Ellipse of Uncertainty: An Introduction to Postmodern Fantasy* by Lance Olsen**

Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1987; hc, 134 pp.

reviewed by Kathryn Cramer

Ellipse of Uncertainty is appropriately titled for more reasons than those that perhaps occurred to the author. It is a frustrating, fascinating book, but the application of the ideas in the book to the contemporary fantasy field is left as an exercise for the reader. In fact, a reader with no previous knowledge of fantasy could read all 134 pages of the book and remain pristinely innocent of the existence of a fantasy field as anything other than an arcane offshoot of avant-garde literature, existing mainly in translation. Evangeline Walton, Samuel R. Delany, Ursula K. Le Guin, Andre Norton, and Patricia McKillip all appear on the back cover in advertisements of other books from Greenwood Press, but appear nowhere within the interior of the book. The closest Olsen comes to discussing writers actually central to the fantasy field are his mentions of Kurt Vonnegut and Edgar Allan Poe. He writes about fantasy as though he invented the concept. But why rub sticks together when there are matches?

Ellipse of Uncertainty is largely a further development of many of the concepts in Rosemary Jackson's 1981 book, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, about which he says,

Jackson takes [Tzvetan] Todorov's ideas [as expressed in his 1975 book *The Fantastic: A Structuralist Approach to a Literary Genre*] and reshapes them slightly so that they both do not fall into ethnocentrism and do account for fantasies in and out of the nineteenth century. She defines fantasy as a mode of discourse. At one end of the continuum is the marvelous, at the other the mimetic (Todorov's uncanny). Hovering in-between—sometimes near one end of the continuum, sometimes hovering near the other—exists the fantastic (p. 18)

Her basic argument is that fantasy can be a subversive literature. Olsen's icing on Jackson's cake, justifying his book-length work, is his introduction of the concept of postmodernism into the discussion of the subversive aspect to fantasy.

The thesis of Olsen's book is that,

...hovering between the marvelous and the mimetic modes on our continuum floats fantasy, a mode that confounds and confuses the marvelous and the mimetic. It plays one off the other, creating a dialectic which refuses synthesis...fantasy is that stutter between two modes of discourse that creates textual instability, an ellipse of uncertainty...Fantasy is a deconstructive mode of narrative. (p. 19)

Olsen defines fantasy as,

a metagenre that touches upon romance, fairy tales, pornography, myth, legend, the *nouveau roman*, pulp fiction, science fiction, satire, utopia, dystopia, detective story, allegory, dream visions, surrealist fiction, gothic novels, expressionist texts, tales of horror, and so on. In its pure form it is opposed to the dominant culture of dates, times, places, and certainty." (p. 116)

This portmanteau definition bears too close a resemblance to what one might shovel out on a college English exam for which one had neglected to study. While not actually wrong, the definition is indistinct, lacking the relations between, say, pornography and fantasy are not at all the same as those between science fiction and fantasy. His is the kind of definition that make one want to say, "Yes,

and...?" Like the rest of the book, it is startlingly incomplete, vaguely bounded, uncertain as to edges.

Even more peculiar is the resemblance of the above definition to the following passage from Rosemary Jackson's book:

As a critical term, 'fantasy' has been applied rather indiscriminately to any literature which does not give priority to realistic representation: myths, legends, folk and fairy tales, utopian allegories, dream visions, surrealist texts, science fiction, horror stories, all presenting realms 'other' than the human. A characteristic most frequently associated with literary fantasy has been its obdurate refusal or prevailing definitions of the 'real' and the 'possible,' a refusal amounting at times to violent opposition. (pp. 13-14)

The resemblance between these two passages is unmistakable. One wonders whether Olsen disagrees that this is an indiscriminate definition, whether he is being deliberately indiscriminate in his definition, or whether the Jackson 'definition' was simply the closest to hand when he was writing that part, a misinterpretation at the center of his argument.

His definitions of postmodernism are also lists, which, if quoted in their entirety, would require that this essay include substantially more of Olsen's book than provided for by the Fair Use doctrine in U. S. copyright law. He cites Italo Calvino on postmodernism: "Calvino lists thirty-three traits of postmodernism, all of which in one way or another have to do with this notion of 'disembedding'..." (disembedding in the sense of taking apart rather than as applies to slasher films). Some of the other lists don't involve disembedding at all.

The book discusses the work of Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Samuel Beckett, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, John M. Coetzee, and Thomas Pynchon in a way that holds out some promise. Some authors whose work might productively have been discussed using the methodology presented in this book, but who, of course, are never mentioned, include Robert Aickman (both his dark fantasy and the novel *The Model*), Philip K. Dick, H. P. Lovecraft (who, although anti-modern rather than postmodern, shares many themes with the writers discussed in the book; Jackson spends a considerable amount of space on Lovecraft in her discussion of nameless things and thingless names), Ramsey Campbell (e. g. *The Face that Must Die*), and Thomas M. Disch (particularly *The Asian Shore*). While it is interesting to have the former group discussed as fantasy writers, one must ask what distinguishes the former group from the latter, other than literary in-ness and the fact that the majority of the writers in the former group wrote in a language other than English, whereas all of the writers in the latter group wrote in English? Does Olsen exclude all the latter because they write in modern or anti-modern styles? Does he exclude them because he's never bothered to read them? Perhaps they don't add enough grey to their pinks? He doesn't say; he should have.

Rosemary Jackson excludes a number of writers from her discussion in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, and since Olsen seems heavily influenced by that book, perhaps by looking at Jackson's reasons, one might gain insight into Olsen's. She explains:

...Those texts which attempt that movement and that transgressive function [subversion] have been given most space in this book, for in them the fantastic is at its most uncompromising in its integration of the 'nature' of the 'real'.

One consequence of this focus is that some of the better known authors of fantasy works (in the popular sense) are given less space than might be expected. For example, the best-selling fantasies by Kingsley, Lewis, Tolkien, Le Guin or Richard Adams are not discussed at great length. This is not simply through prejudice against their particular ideals, nor through an attempt to recommend other texts as more 'progressive' in any easy way, but because they belong to that realm of fantasy which is more properly defined as fairy, or romance literature. Moral and religious allegories, parables and fables informing the stories of Kingsley and Tolkien move away from the

unsettling implications which are found at the center of the purely 'fantastic.' Their original impulse may be similar, but they move from it, expressing their desire and frequently displacing it into religious longing and nostalgia. Thus they diffuse potentially disturbing, anti-social drives and retreat from any profound confrontation with existential dis-ease. (p. 9)

What all this basically comes down to is that Jackson feels that Tolkien, Le Guin, et al. do not write subversive fantasy because their works lack a sufficiency of deliberate 'non-signification.' Jackson undercuts a perfectly good argument by excluding authors whose works clearly include radical estrangements (as even average fantasies do), implying that the excluded authors are somehow non-meaning about the wrong things. This weakens her book as a whole unnecessarily.

Excluding certain authors' works from critical discussions when the theory at hand seems not to apply is a fairly standard technique. But when concepts like non-signification are involved, truly absurd logical problems can and do arise. While it is probably safe enough to say that someone like Gary Gygax or the bestselling team of Margaret Weiss & Tracy Hickman do not write subversive fantasy, one should not be so sure about Tolkien, Le Guin, T. H. White, C. S. Lewis, and others of that stature. It is all a question of what one considers the proper target of subversion.

Olsen is similarly focused on the issue of non-meaning. He has the perverse rhetorical advantage of his silence.

One is tempted to remark that perhaps the works of these excluded fantasy writers non-signify so well that Jackson and Olsen failed to notice that which was not signified. More to the point, neither *Waiting for Götter* nor *The Crying of Lot 49* have non-meaning in even remotely the same way as a blank piece of paper. (If they did, why bother?) I do have a sense of what both of Jackson and Olsen are getting at; 'non-meaning' and 'non-signification' are not quite the appropriate terms for the informational dynamic of the fiction they discuss, nor (in Olsen's case) is postmodernism.

Olsen's analysis of "Aum" by Carlos Fuentes (telescoping all the female characters down into one, and all the male characters into one, and then combining these two, the male and female halves, into one personality) can equally well be applied to Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, an early modern work. Also consider the case of J. R. R. Tolkien, whose fiction Jackson classes as "transcendentalist," backward-looking "to a lost moral and social hierarchy, which [Tolkien's] fantasies attempt to recapture and revivify." (p. 2) The climactic scene of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy—the scene in which it takes the interactions of Frodo, Gollum, and Sam Gamgee to actually get the Ring thrown into the volcano—or the chapter "Riddles in the Dark" in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* can also be fruitfully analyzed using a variant of this method. As with many of his analyses, Olsen is not clear why this methodology or discussion should be specific to postmodern fantasy.

Robert Aickman belongs in the chapter, "Diagnosing Fantastic Autism: Kafka, Borges, and Robbe-Grillet":

...the fictions of Kafka, Borges, and Robbe-Grillet display—at one level or another—all the symptoms of texts charged with anxiety, frustration, and despair before the recognition that they cannot control the external cosmos, cannot partake of communal, cannot imagine hope for the future. In other words, they all display the literary analogue—and, of course, I should want to emphasize it is *only* an analogue—of autism.

Closed structures, locked doors, small stuffy rooms, mirrors, labyrinths, and narrow streets—all are imagistic registers of isolation, self-absorption, and the limits of imagination." (p. 28)

The architectural description in particular sounds like nothing so much as the building in Aickman's story, "The Hospice." In fact, of the authors not mentioned in the book, Aickman seems the one to whom Olsen's analysis is most applicable. Is Aickman omitted because he is not "postmodern"?

One comes away from the book uncertain whether Olsen is

positing a theory for all fantasy or only postmodern fantasy, uncertain where postmodern fantasy fits in with the rest of fantasy, uncertain what he would say about the rest of fantasy, and uncertain whether his ellipses are deliberate or a result of ignorance. Olsen gives the strong impression of someone who's read more criticism than fiction, of someone whose vision is limited by the confines of his academic status (which is protected by his dealing with only canonical texts). Even taking that into consideration, however, it is difficult to understand how he managed to ignore the central writers of fantasy to this extreme extent. Reading other critics, many of whom (such as Kathryn Hume and Rosemary Jackson) do refer to writers central to the fantasy field, should have given him some clue as to the relevance of the body of fantasy literature.

Robert Aickman ("The Hospice"), Thomas M. Disch ("The Asian Shore"), Philip K. Dick ("A Little Something for Us Tempnauts"), Gene Wolfe ("Seven American Nights")...all of these stories have that

particular quality of non-signification that Olsen and Jackson seem to be after. And all of those stories appear in the third section of David G. Hartwell's anthology *The Dark Descent* (1987), "A Fabulous Formless Darkness," a horror anthology. And it is no coincidence that they should all appear together, published as horror.

Horror is a genre defined by its emotional territory: horror, terror, fear, anxiety, loathing, sadness, etc. Fiction having that quality of "disease," which Jackson refers to, is a subset of contemporary horror. The horror field cleaves into three categories: moral allegory, psychological metaphor, and a third stream which addresses the nature of reality, or, as Jackson put it, interrogates the 'nature' of the 'real.' What then does "postmodern fantasy," as described by Olsen, amount to? It is indistinguishable from third stream horror. I remain unconvinced as to whether the phenomena Olsen analyzes have anything much to do with postmodernism as such, or whether the relation is mere optical illusion. ▴

Neither the Beginning Nor the End of Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Semiotics, or Deconstruction for SF Readers: An Introduction

Part 2 of 3
by Samuel R. Delany



History Intervenes

1966 marks an important year for structuralist/post-structuralist debates in America. At Johns Hopkins University, in October, an international array of scholars, many of them French, met for what was to

The margin is frequently a privileged position in these debates. Much of interest goes on in the margins of a seemingly more centered discussion.

be the first of two years of eight international seminars on *The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, selections of which were eventually published as *The Structuralist Controversy* (eds. Macksey & Donato, Baltimore and London, 1972). For those turning from popularizers to primary statements by Derrida, Lacan, Lucian Goldman, and René Girard, this volume (along with the special 1966 issue of *Yale French Studies*, republished as a Doubleday Anchor Book, *Structuralism*, edited by Jacques Ehrmann, New York & Garden City, 1970), with its illuminating discussion by the debate participants, is both invaluable and indispensable early reading. Certainly these conferences began to bring an awareness of these otherwise primarily European discussions to America.

Earlier that year, Michel Foucault had published his fourth book in Paris, *Les Mots et les Choses* (*The Order of Things*, Vintage, 1968). The book was both dense and lyrical—as well as profoundly systemic. It presented itself as a general "archaeology" of the concept of representation and a study of the changes representation underwent during the age of French Classicism, i.e., the 17th and 18th centuries. In the course of it, Foucault traced out an intricate shift in the general concept of the sign (representation must occur by means of signs), through a tripartite archaeology of three different fields: the transformation of the early Science of Wealth into the modern idea of economics, the transformation of the old notion of Natural science into the modern ideas of biology, and the transformation of the General Grammar of Condillac and the 17th century grammarians of Port Royale into the modern idea of philology and linguistics.

By placing this account of Foucault here, by starting not with his earlier work, but with his fourth book (and third major contribution), I am very consciously trying to produce the effect that Foucault's position in the overall debate was, and remains since his death in 1984, that of a dauntingly erudite intervention in what, for all the internal disagreements, is otherwise all too easily reduced to a kind of thematic—yes, I can use the word too—a thematic that, at least without Foucault, centers almost entirely on language, literature, and primitive, "exotic" cultures, and very little on history and the current practices of

Western men and women.

Immediately Foucault was called a structuralist.

Immediately he claimed, at length and with conviction, that he was not such thing.

His next book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, was a wholly theoretical, extended "position paper" on the principles of his work till then; it concluded with an outline of where these principles might take him in the future. And one thing became, with this book, very clear for all Foucault's lucid apprehension of the debates up till now, the semiotic thrust of *The Order of Things* was a necessary accident, rather than his own central concern. The impressive and lucid development of Foucault's work is such a compelling narrative that it was finally able to replace the simpler narrative many were tempted to tell about it, i.e., that he was the latest, most impressive contributor of a new chapter to an old story.

The Double Text

The story that replaces it was, in fact, a double story. The first part is simply the systematic progression of his subject matter. Foucault's first major book, *Madness and Civilization* (1961), attempted to trace, in those same classical centuries, the way the mad changed their position in society, as well as the changes in the way madness itself was perceived. The "origin," the "theme," of Foucault's story has been recounted many times. If we can keep in mind that the second part of

the story—the theoretical progression of Foucault's work—develops precisely to analyze, to deconstruct if you will, to show the illusions and presuppositions and assumptions we blindly follow (and that presumably he once followed) that make it such an appealing story, such an easy narrative, then that story is worth recounting both for its seductions and for its insights.

Endemic throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, leprosy underwent a spontaneous (and to this day, largely unexplained) remission at the end of the 14th century. In most major cities, the largest buildings by far were the leper hospitals—Bicêtre and

Centered around Moorcock's *New Worlds*, the British New Wave of the 1960s was largely anti-theory, which, in retrospect, seems only a continuation of the generally anti-intellectual current that has run through the history of science fiction—as well as an expression of the gentlemanly British distrust of anything too abstract (le classicist attitude toward the sciences, which were associated with the rising education of the 19th century English working classes), an attitude shared today, however much headway some of these debates sometimes seem to have made, by the majority of American university English departments, incidentally. Nevertheless, in 1967, while I was in London I received a report of a meeting that Langdon

"While we sit discussing the word, power works in silence." (Foucault)

Chambrion in Paris, Bedlam in London. But with these great buildings now all but empty, we come to the 17th century's "Great Confinement," where the government rounded up all the unshightly of Paris—the poor, the homeless, the drunk, the unemployed, the mad—and imprisoned them in these same, huge, dank buildings. Over the next years, one by one, the various categories of indigent were returned to the streets and to freedom. New laws were passed either to provide for, or to constrain them. The only ones to remain confined were the mad—who, until the Confinement, had been allowed to wander free, often to starve, occasionally to be sent by boat from city to city, but still out as a visible part of the social tapestry.

With the new situation, however, the insane asylum was now socially in place—as well, the modern concept of "madness" was posited, a concept that had as much to do with assumptions about medieval leprosy associated with the buildings in which the mad were now housed (their new position) as it did with the work ethic, with visibility, and with all the themes of the Confinement. Madness, like medieval leprosy, was both an illness and a punishment from God; madness, like medieval leprosy, was a price paid for a certain behavior, a behavior that could just as easily have been our parents' behavior as our own in childhood; madness, like medieval leprosy, held an ambiguous status between illness, sin and crime—all ideas that are slightly displaced, but not fundamentally changed, by Pines's great humanitarian move, when in the 19th century, he took the chains from the mad at Bicêtre, ideas we can still trace in Freud's own theories of psychoanalysis as well as in the common prejudices of common people.

This is the story, as I said, many people still tell of Foucault's first major work. It is certainly a wonderful, clarifying story. But it is precisely the story that the rest of his work analyzes with great vigilance, that the rest of his work dissolves and deconstructs. The story, of course, is too simple; it leaves out too much. It must be read carefully and historically for its repressions and its gaps.

A former student of Foucault's, Jacques Derrida, wrote a thirty-three page examination of what he took to be the philosophical underpinnings and limitations of Foucault's book, "The Cogito and the History of

Madness" (*Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago; 1978); and in the next edition of his own book, Foucault took on Derrida's critique as a philosophical challenge. This is one of the great moments of the debates. But the most important critique Foucault leveled against himself was historical rather than philosophical: one could not explore the idea of the "mad" and the "mentally ill" until one had a good handle on the development of the idea of "illness" itself.

Three conventions of science fiction were located.

1) The Generous Universe: In a world where no one survives a plane crash, in a solar system with only one oxygenated planet, science fiction was still full of spaceships crashing on planets in which everyone walks away unscathed from the wreck into a landscape with a breathable atmosphere, with amenable flora and fauna, and civilized beings...

2) Linear Intelligence: In a world where the reigning math genius at any given university is eighty pounds over- (or under- weight and can't keep his shirt buttons in their right button holes, science fiction presents a world where a genius in one field is invariably a genius in all, often has a black belt in karate, and can negotiate with total suavity any social situation whatsoever...

3) History Responds to the Individual: in a world where no social progress seems possible unless groups of people work long and hard together, science fiction continually presents a universe where one man is capable of changing the course of history...

These were the conventions of science fiction, of course, that *New Worlds* was not interested in promulgating in its pages.

As an antecedent and productive of that program was, twenty-five years ago, I would propose, however, that a meaningful theoretical reading of science fiction begins when we start looking at such works as Asimov's *Foundation* series, Brunner's *The Whole Man*, and Russ's *We Who Are About to...* as at once accepting of, and at the same time rigorously critical toward, these conventions, an examination that will reveal both the acceptance and the critique as intricately related, so that these conventions are not allowed to sediment into "themes" but are opened up into the complex and serious problematics these and other of writers treat them as.

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Foucault's next book, *The Birth of the Clinic*, was about precisely that concept, as it underwent its own changes over the same classical period. How, asks Foucault, did illness shift from a geographical organism (an entity that moved through countries, invaded cities, fixed itself on neighborhoods, an entity with a life cycle of youth and strength and declining weakness), to an entity that centered on, and finally located itself wholly within, the body?

The opening passages of Foucault's books tend to be as arresting as the hooks commencing the James Bond films. *The Birth of the Clinic* begins by quoting a mid-18th-century doctor named Pomme,

who describes his treatment of an hysterical woman by making her "take baths ten or twelve hours a day, for ten whole months." The results of such a ghastly regimen? Pomme saw "membranous tissue like pieces of damp parchment...peel away with some slight discomfort, and these were passed daily with the urine; the right ureter also peeled away and came out whole in the same way." The same thing occurred with the intestines, which, at another stage, "peeled off their internal tunics, which we saw pass from the rectum. The oesophagus, the tongue, and the arterial trachea also peeled in due course, and the patient either had rejected different pieces by vomiting or by expectoration."

A modern medical reader of this report must find it some bizarre concoction of wild fantasy and impenetrable misapprehension. Yet, from a hundred years later, Foucault gives a medical report that, by most modern standards, reads like a medical report. What, asks Foucault, happened between the two? What were Pomme and the many, many respected doctors of the time who wrote similar reports, seeing? He does not ask, you understand, what we would see were we gazing on the patient in their stead. What, he asks, constituted their gaze?

But even at the end of this study, for all the questions that were resolved, more were left open.

Economics, biology, and the foundations of language study, as each had undergone its own changes, had to be taken into account so that even the expanded argument, and certainly the original one, were simply vacuous without such considerations...

This was *The Order of Things*—which is where we came in. And the dazzling opening here is a luminous consideration of representation in Velázquez's painting, *Las Meninas* (*The Maid-in-Waiting*, 1656, also known as *The Royal Family*), a painting which, despite its deceptively untroubled surface (unlike the self-referential play rampant in modern works, no thing and its representation are simultaneously shown), is a nearly Escher-like visual construct: a painting of a painter painting a painting of humans and animals, noble and common, whole and deformed, while a king and a queen (Philip IV and Mariana, the reflected subjects of the painting), courtiers, and commoners observe him and what he observes from mirrors, through doors, from the darkened frames of other paintings, and presumably from the small "chabones" of the Prado castle, where the ten-and-a-half by nine foot portrait of the Infanta Margarita in a studio of the Escorial was finally hung, the several positions collapsed one into the other before a frame containing an image the artist alone could have never observed.

The next book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, was purely

theoretical. It repeated from the earlier books why Foucault had found it necessary to look not only at the history of the accumulation of right knowledge (i.e., knowledge currently still acceptable) but had to pay as much attention to historical writings that strike us today as lunatic (the aspect of his work that makes it an archaeology rather than a history): this was the only way he could discern the range of the system—the epistémè—which is the synchronic organization of thought in a given period. More important, Foucault now expressed his dissatisfaction with the archaeological metaphor—and the idea of an epistémè that went along with it—abandoning it here for a new theoretical battery of genealogies, enunciations, discourse, and *dispositifs* (which means both dispositions and apparatuses). In the terminal chapters he announced a set of possible future projects he might undertake.

The traditional notion of the sign is that of "the signifier of the signified," a signifier that leads to a signified, a word that connects to a thought, a sign that cleaves to a meaning. Derrida has suggested that we take the model for the sign, however, from writing: "the signifier of the signifier," a signifier that leads to another signifier, a written word that leads to a spoken word, a sign that leads to another sign. Thus our object of analysis always becomes some form of Pierce's unlimited semiosis.

Under such an analytic program, the beginnings and ends of critical arguments and essays grow particularly difficult. The "natural" sense of commencement and sense of closure the thematic critics consider appropriate to, and implicitly allied throughout, the "naturally" bounded topic of his or her concern now is revealed to be largely artificial and overwhelmingly ideologic.

Thus the beginnings and endings (as well as the often easier middle arguments, once we are aboard) of our criticism must embody consciously creative and political strategies.

the disciplines inflicted on the "soul" of the presumably penitential prisoner and observed only by the prison officials). *Discipline and Punish* was Foucault's next and generally most popular book. But with it, the original story of the detention/constitution of the mad was now so thin and emended as to be unrecognizable.

In *Discipline and Punish* the opening move is a devastating eyewitness account of a public drawing and quartering, complete with melted lead, hot wax, and eventual burning at the stake (much of which, with ropes breaking, arms refusing to part from the still-conscious body, as the torturers with their pincers simply were not strong enough to strip the tendons from the criminal, didn't work or was monumentally inefficient in accomplishing its ends). The victim was a 16th-century noble who had attempted regicide. Against this account, Foucault poses, from not a hundred years later, the pious and sanctimonious busy-work that was by then the daily schedule for prisoners in French jails. How, Foucault tries to answer, does one practice give way, or transform, into the other?

A subsidiary volume, *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, My Brother...*, which Foucault edited and contributed to, grew out of a seminar Foucault conducted around the first case in France where

psychiatric evidence was effectively brought in to commute a death sentence to life. The compilation brings together numerous documents around a murder in 1835, in which a "near-idiot" 18-year-old French peasant wiped out his mother and her children, whom he believed were destroying the quality of his father's life. The book includes depositions from doctors, lawyers, and various witnesses in the small community, testimony from the trial, and various newspaper accounts of the time. Various participants in the seminar, including Foucault, contribute seven terminal essays in which they discuss the range of problems surrounding this tragic dossier—the central document of which is the 40-page pamphlet the young murderer wrote, explaining his situation, his motives, and his conviction that he'd performed his act aware that death would be his retribution. Shortly after completing the piece, Rivière committed suicide in jail, when his death sentence, over his protest, was commuted.

Now Foucault turned to still another project, also mentioned at the end of *The Archaeology*, a five-volume history of sexuality. Only the introductory volume appeared in the form initially outlined. The end of the introductory volume, *The Will to Knowledge*, promised that the remaining four volumes of the work would deal with the medical invention of "perversion," the "hybridization" of women's bodies (i.e., the prioritizing of women's reproductive function), and the control of children's sexuality.

It was a loaded list. It was a work that promised insights, if not inspiration, for feminists, for gay activists, and even for much harassed groups like NAMBLA (the North American Man-Boy-Love Association). At one point, leaving his university in Paris, Foucault was set on by some young men, thrown to the ground, and beaten—a sobering experience for a professional scholar who wrote of Nietzsche and Heidegger, Raymond Roussel, Margritte, Blanchot, and Bataille, who delivered lectures on the difference between political and pastoral power...

The next two books (all Foucault lived to complete) do not fulfill the promise raised at the end of *The Will to Knowledge*. While, in their prefaces, Foucault provides telling reasons for his decision to abandon his original scheme, the easy story to tell is that, in the years just prior to his death, the Foucauldian enterprise collapsed under the pressure of time, his own recomplexed theoretical elaborations, possibly the repeated threats to his life—or even his waning intellectual powers, a waning of which the books he did write, or the many interviews he gave, I must say, show no sign.

I will conclude with the observation that the story of Foucault's decline (before the final six-week infection that killed him) is far too easy a tale—as much in need of critique as the tale of the social origins of modern madness he first attracted our attention with.

The Ends of the Beginnings

The slippery and elusive change between structuralism and post-structuralism in the thirty-year debate is often characterized by a change in an attitude we have already cited: the daunting and massively systematic organization in which the thought of the early thinkers was couched, and the belief in the scientificity of their enterprises by Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, and Lacan. In retrospect, certainly it marks a sort of style. And that was what the next wave, characterized as post-structuralist, turned to critique in its examination of totality, of mastery, of closure, in a philosophical and historical examination of the metaphysical grounding of absolute knowledge as Plato had aspired to it and as Hegel claimed to have attained it.

But as usual we are progressing too quickly. In 1967, among three books that he published that year, Derrida presented his study, that we've always mentioned, *Of Grammatology*. In it he analyzes—a near synonym, recall, for deconstructs—the opposition between voice and writing that runs, in general, through

The signifier of the signifier...
The margin of the margin...
Can a discussion of such topics as we are reviewing here take place anywhere in the at precincts other than at its margins? *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, where they now appear, is itself—like all fanzines—marginal to the science fiction genre. Yet, as has been noted, the margin is frequently the strongest position from which to deposit/disposition a strategic program, to set it in motion.

Western philosophy since Plato, and specifically through the work of Lévi-Strauss and, in the second half of Derrida's study, the 18th-century French philosopher of the noble savage, Jean Jacques Rousseau. In a brief section between the opening moment and the closing body of the book, however, he traces and analyzes the same use of voice and writing in Saussure's own work on the sign. What lies under them all—it should be old news to us by now—is a nostalgia for self-presence, for authority, for unity, for a metaphysical grounding on which the concepts of man, the sign, the self, the primitive, and the civilized might stand. All we need to know here is that in the context of Barthes's work and Foucault's from the same years, this seemed certainly another important contribution to the analysis of the sign.

A year after Derrida's first triple "biblio-biliaz" (Barbara Johnson's term), in spring of 1968 Martin Luther King was assassinated by James Earl Ray in Atlanta. Days later, Valéry Solanis, a radical feminist, attempted to assassinate artist Andy Warhol as an example of an exploiter of women. A day after, that was knocked off the front page by the assassination of Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles by Sirhan Sirhan. In response to the racial situation, black students by now were sitting in at Columbia University. The whole situation in New York erupted one night in April, when the police decided to remove the students, after first jamming the Columbia University radio station through which the students were organizing and directing their protests and demonstrations.

WBAI-FM, a public radio station with hundreds of thousands of listeners, volunteered its services to the demonstrations. Very soon, the police actions exploded in horrendous, night-long police brutality and violence—which, because the whole evening was being broadcast on WBAI, was heard by thousands on thousands of people, throughout the night, across the city and the state.

In France, a student strike was planned in sympathy with the American students. Unlike U. S. workers, French workers joined with the students. The result, in France, was what has been referred to ever since as May '68, when students and workers came within inches of seizing control of the entire nation. Very little on the French intellectual horizon was left unchanged by this momentous event. Certainly one change was that what had generally been referred to as "structuralism" before was, in the light of the new, radical political consciousness, now spoken of as "post-structuralism." The general critique of totality, of power, of mastery, and of marginality, focused by the events of '68, burgeoned with the new and exciting theoretical work.

One text here that can be read as a response to the new sense of freedom and expanded possibilities growing up over the decade in France after '68 is Derrida's 1977 book, *Glas*, a two-column examination of, respectively, Genet and Hegel, a daunting moebius strip of a book, where a consideration of the German philosopher, the family, and legitimacy runs along by (till finally it circles around to become one with) its darker side, an inquiry into the criminal novelist, crime, bastardy, and marginality (each critique written, as it were, in the margins of the other), each of which starts and stops in the middle of a sentence, each of which, at its beginning and end, seeming—almost—to join with the other.

Anyone who had looked at the text of *Glas* (which means the tolling of a bell), with its double columns, multiple type faces, marginal inserts, the deployment of white space and general typographic complexity, can see that by now the very coherence and unity of the

The French academic system within which (and in reaction to which) much of this critical discourse arose is for more rigorous—and in a word, hidebound—than the American academy. But this means that many of the moves associated with it, such as the bringing to bear of vast analytic situation on some initially marginal text (often by great writers) has an effect both of playfulness and scandal that is lost, or at least mitigated, when brought across the sea. One of Derrida's most interesting books, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Style*, turns, for instance, on a massive analysis of a notebook jotted by the German philosopher that says, simply, "My umbrella." What does such intellectual playfulness mean, however, when transferred to the far more relaxed American academic landscape? These questions of institution and interpretation have been discussed with some precision by Samuel Weber (U. of Montana Press, 1987).

Read This

Recently read and recommended by Martha Soukup:

Surfing Incipient Insanity. I spent 1988 on the Nebula Jury; so while I read and looked at many, many dozens of books last year, they were all 1988 sf/fantasy—hence this list.

Loose Connections, by Sybil Clairborne (Academy Chicago). A slender short-story collection, some rather (like it and some not) "Acid Rain" (one of the "nots") is the most elegant study of romantic obsession I've ever read.

Fire on the Mountain, by Terry Bisson. You know, I don't give a damn about all the foofaw over is-this-a-legit-utopia. Somehow I never read it as a utopia anyway, too busy being blown away by excellent storytelling and lovely, impressionistic characterization that I intend to study for a long while.

Bones of the Moon, by Jonathan Carroll. And I'm pro-choice.

"In a World Like This," by Nancy Kress (in *Omens*, October, 1988). So go ask your magazine librarian for it. A powerful short story about the way people need to see the world around them.

Trinity and Other Stories, by Nancy Kress (Ace). Lots more good stories (okay, I cheated on my jury duties) from earlier in Kress's career.

Islands in the Net, by Bruce Sterling. Sterling merges the political concerns of c-stuff with the viewpoint of humanism. Don't tell anyone.

Desolation Road, by Ian McDonald. Sort of like Marquez on Mars, it has a playfulness that's endearing (except when it occasionally crosses the line to dumb). How dare McDonald be a year younger than I am, with a book like this already in print?

Becoming Alien, by Rebecca Ore and *Walkabout Woman*, by Michaela Roesner. One sf, one fantasy; with *Desolation Road*, the best first novels (I think Roesner's is a first) of 1988.

critical page has broken down, as well as the quest after facility of expression traditionally associated with classical French criticism. This "family romance" of absolute knowledge (*savoir absolu*, *Sal*, the immaculate Conception [IC], and its marginal subversion is a very beautiful book, both to look at and to read.

One of the best kept secrets of post-structuralism is that Derrida's next work, *The Postcard*, is actually a rather dry, experimental novel about a man trying to make a phone call from a phone booth at Oxford. For those of you who enjoy the work of Harry Matthews or James McElroy, let me recommend it to you. It has certainly got to be one of the most remaindered books in the whole debate.

Totally seems figured in the very metaphysics that grounds the fiction of "the systematic." (For Barthes, a fiction was "anything that partakes of the systematic.") But closer examination shows that all through Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, and Althusser, you find them warning their readers against the totality of their apparent systematicity. It is only as this warning ceases to be presented as passing comment and becomes, with some of the later commentators,—dare we say it? (Yes,

if we accept the analytical imperative)—a theme, that it distinguishes, however briefly, mistily, and finally inadequately, a post-structuralist leaning away from the dense, massive, systematic enterprises that might, if squinted at enough, seem to be at least one of the things structuralism was about.

Historically, I have already cited May '68 in France as a nodal point. But if one book was perceived as a *transition* between the two, structuralism and post-structuralism, it was Roland Barthes's write-up of his 1970 seminar on Balzac, *SSZ*. In this famous book, Barthes reads a till-then almost-ignored 36-page novellet by Balzac, "Sarrasine," about a young sculptor of that name who comes to Paris from the provinces and falls in love with a castrato, Zambinella, whom he initially believes to be a woman. As a result of intricate plottings, deceptions, cross purposes, and—yes—self-deceptions, Sarrasine dies in the end. Balzac's story is indubitably interesting for a whole range of attitudes, both of license and of repression, it reveals about a number of topics ordinarily associated neither with Balzac nor with the 19th century. But as indubitably, its sentimentality and general artificiality make the tale, among such a sprawling *opera omnia* as Balzac's, all too easy to ignore. At any rate, in *SSZ*, Barthes shattered Balzac's story into five-hundred-twelve sections, or *lexias*, each of which he shows is controlled by one or more of five codes: the semic code, which covers what we might accept as ordinary signs, such as grammatical signs on the ends of words, or quotation marks to signal dialogue; the symbolic code, which covers artistic and cultural allusions; the referential code, in which the text appeals to what might be called knowledge of the social; the hermeneutic code, in which the text suggests there is some mystery to be solved; and the proairetic code, in which the text indicates directly or indirectly that some action is occurring.

These codes, and these five codes alone (declares Barthes), exhaust what is going on in the story's 512 successive *lexias*. The sheer operationalism of assigning each *lexia* its appropriate code(s) seems rather a parody of what an unsympathetic observer of the structuralist dialogue till then might have found all structuralism to have been good for. But the enterprise is redeemed by the 93 digressions on reading, all more or less brief essays (most of them on reading this particular story), with which Barthes punctuates the otherwise near-mechanical progression of codic assignments. These digressions range from thoughts on the readerly—or "fissile"—text (the text we have all learned to expect a story to be, a story in which every readerly unit is exhausted by just such a limited set of codes—the well-made, well-plotted, and eminently forgettable story, such as "Sarrasine") to the writerly—or "scriptible"—text (the text that produces no notable reading experience without active participation by the reader, as though the reader were the writer—the text that even so thin a tale as

"Sarrasine" becomes when subjected to a certain analytical pressure), to notions about castrations and psychoanalysis. With them, Barthes moves us into a critique of system, into a consideration of the excesses that outstrip even his own schema, and finally into a distrust of precisely the totality his pentagraphic codic exhaustiveness would seem to set in place.

And in Barthes's next book (not a full 70 pages), *The Pleasure of the Text*, the systematic has been reduced to the alphabetic ordering of the key words in a set of similar digressions, in which any particular text as the occasion for these highly charged, meticulously written, and finally poetic meditations on the boredom of reading, the pleasure of reading, and the ecstasy of reading (Barthes uses the French word *jouissance*, which is both "bliss" and "orgasm") has disappeared.

Perhaps the only thing to say after this in the discussion of semiotics *per se* (rather than about semiotics as it must endlessly aid and abet any discussion of representation)—and saying it both for the provocation and for the implied criticism—is that semiotics seems to me to persist, beyond this point, as that which, in the face of post-structuralist critique of the systematic, retains its systematic allegiances, even as it tries to take into account that critique.

But then semiotics is not a branch of the dialogue I have followed with any real care for the last few years. For an accessible and sensitive overview of recent semiotic developments, I recommend Marvin Blonsky's anthology *On Signs*.

We find no more monolithically positive (or negative) an attitude toward popular and/or marginal culture among the post-structuralist and semiotic debates (the discussions there that obtain most directly to sf) than we do toward anything else. Critics such as the late Theodore Adorno and the currently popular Terry Eagleton do not believe popular culture can be any more than a conservative reaffirmation of the status quo, or, in Eagleton's case, that such a "culture" could have any effect on any branch of thought whatsoever. But critics such as Frederick Jameson and Umberto Eco feel that popular culture is the site of some of the most important thinking that occurs in any society at all. (Eco's 1962 essay, "The Myth of Superman," in *The Role of the Reader* [Indiana U. Press, 1979], is one of the most sensitive, informed, and insightful things ever written on comic books—a judgment I do not hand easily to an academic.) And in a discourse that has already produced sensitive discussions of film and television, we will not find ourselves all that lost. The usual situation of the sf reader, confronted with criticism in general, is to discover, after whatever initial period of critical enthusiasm the critic claims for the genre, only the genre's lacks. In the post-structuralist mode of critical discourse, however, there is a good chance for us to forge a dialogue in which to speak with both passion and precision about our strengths.

And that seems worth the risk.

The Gold Coast by Kim Stanley Robinson

New York: Tor, 1988, \$3.95 pb, 389 pp.

Green Mars by Kim Stanley Robinson

New York: A Tor Double, (with *A Meeting with Medusa*), \$2.95 pb, 113 pp.

reviewed by Donald M. Hassler

The Gold Coast, issued early last year and then released in time for Christmas in an attractive paperback, is a major novel of futuristic dystopia set in Orange County and peopled with an array of Southern California extraterrestrials from the Valley girls, drug dealers, and sf writers we know today.

Green Mars is yoked with Arthur C. Clarke's Nebula-winning novella from 1972 to form the first Tor Double, and I found it a pleasantly nostalgic trip back to the old Ace Doubles. I bought it immediately, then learned that the Robinson novella had appeared originally in the September 1985 *Asimov's* and itself was almost an award winner, having been reprinted in *Doszoe's The Year's Best SF: Third Annual Collection*. It's a classic story of Mars, boldly unrealistic in the tradition of Zelazny's "A Rose for Ecclesiastes." In the Robinson tale, the capital city of a transformed Mars is named Burroughs.

Robinson uses color imagery skillfully, a well as images from music. The titles of these two fictions on orange groves and lost golden ages both turn on the color green, as opposed to red. But the correspondence that I find most fascinating is the nostalgia that drives the

key characters in both stories.

Robinson makes very clever verbal turns on the notions of forgetting and remembering in *Green Mars*. Science fiction is mostly about the future, of course; hard science fiction must disguise the deep fantasies of wish fulfillment and ego for extrapolation to appear serious and plausible. Robinson makes the themes of nostalgia and memory serious and intellectually "hard" in both stories. (The topic also dominates his early work.) In *Gold Coast*, Jim McPherson, the lost kid in Orange County who eventually becomes a writer after many tiffs with his father the aerospace engineer, speculates at one point that "Nothing explains how a mind can cast back through the years, live there, get lost there.... Tell me another story.... another story about Orange County." (338)

For Robinson, the most plausible link between hard science and literature is memory itself. In fact, the publication history and packaging of these two books are wonderfully consistent with what they have to say. We cannot go back to classic sf images of a terraformed, Burroughs-like Mars. We cannot even go back to the original effects

of classic Doubles. But we can remember, and we can simulate. We can use these resonances for hard, serious thought about the future. Robinson is good at just that.

Robinson is an intellectual writer in the best sense. Using his own knowledge, research, and other writers as inspiration, he builds characters who matter to us, in part because they share our interests in what has been lost and what has been remembered. If this sounds too convoluted and abstract, it's because I'm telling the story without the characters and without the images. Two fleshed-out images that make the point are a green terraformed Mars where all the original redness has been forgotten and an Orange County where all the original groves have been destroyed by the freeways, and also forgotten. In both stories, forgetting leads to new development and progress into the future.

Years ago I did graduate work in 18th-century literature and the Enlightenment. The debate between the Ancients and the Moderns really got going because the Moderns were beginning to remake the future. I am amazed now at how vital Robinson makes this same dilemma. Eventually Robinson's *Green Mars*, thanks to environmental and biological engineering, will become as developed as Orange County, and no one will remember the original red Mars. But the heroes in these two stories try to remember. Everyone involved

delights in the future, but Robinson remembers and urges us to remember. Some of his characters, also, try to remember; but the moves into the future are driven by forgetting. Thus Robinson's tone contains a wonderful ambivalence between dystopian disgust and delight in intellectual play. I was pleased to find Samuel Johnson, as well as his biographer W. J. Bate (who also wrote fine book on modernism, *The Burden of the Past*) mentioned in *The Gold Coast* (261). I even wonder if Robinson was thinking of the 18th-century James Macpherson, forger of the golden age Ossian poems, when he named his hero in this celebration of memory.

I ought not to overemphasize intellectual, even scholarly, qualities in Robinson. These are lively stories with characters and future environments that mean something to us. But they are, also, probing intellectual exercises, straight out of the Enlightenment, on how we must deal with our modernism. And that sort of storytelling, it seems to me, uses the fullest potential of science fiction. I am glad Robinson learned to perform this ancient balancing act of thought and commitment to hope, and I trust he will continue toying with such classic dilemmas. ▴

Donald M. Hassler, a professor at Kent State University, is the author of *Comic Tones in Science Fiction*.

The Chantry Guild by Gordon R. Dickson

New York: Ace Books, 1988; \$17.95 hc; 428 pp.

reviewed by David Lunde

The Chantry Guild, Gordon Dickson's latest addition to the *Cyber Cycle*, begins three years after the events of *The Final Encyclopedia* (1984) with Hal Mayne still attempting to access the Encyclopedia's information—the sum total of human knowledge—in order to break into the Creative Universe. Readers of the *Cyber Cycle* will remember that Hal Mayne was born Donal Graeme, a Dorsai, and that he unified the Younger Worlds in that persona. Then he time-traveled in spirit (by means of the Creative Universe) back to animate the body of Paul Foreman in the 20th Century, where he manipulated history in order to free mankind's adventurous side. Ironically, this produced the Others—the most genetically advanced people crossbred from the Splinter Cultures—who now threaten Hal Mayne and Old Earth.

The Creative Universe—the key to Earth's salvation, which it seems that only Hal can unlock—seems forever out of Hal's reach, which is most frustrating since he has entered it several times without knowing how. His failure has utterly depressed him and it is a crushing blow to the hopes of Old Earth as well, for events have neared a critical point. Warships from ten of the thirteen Younger Worlds have besieged Earth, led by Bleys Ahrens, the leader of the Others. Bleys plans to eradicate humanity on the Younger Worlds and drive mankind back to Old Earth to start over—under his direction, of course.

Earth's *de facto* leader, the Assistant Director of the Encyclopedia, summons Hal's lover, Amanda Morgan, in hopes of shaking Hal out of his funk. She leads him to a new version of the Chantry Guild who turn out to be seeking the same thing he is, entry into the Creative Universe. Encouraged by their belief in the Creative Universe, Hal joins them in their quest.

I don't think it is giving away much to the reader to reveal that Hal succeeds at last. How could he fail? After all, he has already successfully reincarnated himself twice, as well as having gone Jesus one better by walking on air (while he was Donal). This seems to me a major difficulty for Dickson or any writer who uses characters whose abilities are so far beyond the range of normal humans. Everything is too easy for them. Hal mopes and struggles and scratches his soul, but we never doubt that in the end he will achieve his goal. The consequence is that there is little suspense in the book. Dickson has tried to overcome this problem by opposing Hal with another superhuman, Bleys Ahrens, but in this book Bleys appears only once to confront Hal, and it is at a point when Hal has just had a satori and we know he will enter the Creative Universe any time now.

Let me illustrate the problem further with an example from the doings of the other genetically superior person in this book, Amanda

Morgan, "the Third Amanda in eight generations of Morgans; and she had been hand-picked by the Second Amanda as a baby, in the other's old age. Hand-picked, and with her natural abilities trained until she was set apart from the mass of people around her, like a queen...there had only been three Amandas since the human race began; and it had fallen to her to be the last and strongest."

The first chapter of the book shows us Amanda leaving Kultis to hasten back to the Final Encyclopedia in answer to Ajela's summons. The chapter ends thus: "Ahead of her still lay the greater task, the matter of reaching Old Earth itself, which would mean running the gauntlet of the Younger Worlds' fleet besieging that world. Somehow she must slip safely through a thick cordon of much better armed and ready battleships, to which her own small vessel would indeed be a minnow by comparison." How does she accomplish this daunting task? Well, like this:

She sat at her calculations for a while, then put her craft into the series of shifts she had precalculated.

Her first shift was to a space just a thousand kilometers outside the shield above the south polar regions of Earth. This was far enough so uncertainty of the besieging ships as to exactly where she would be after her next shift would lessen her vulnerability. She quickly followed this shift, accordingly, with another precalculated shift to above the north polar regions.

She paused there for the seconds required to choose which, of several destinations she had picked as possible for her next move. She chose, reappearing suddenly above the Equator in an unprotected corner area, keyed in her precalculated shift through the phase-shield and appeared just inside the open corner.

Safe at last? No, safe immediately! No action, no excitement, though we were led to expect some.

Another problem with characters such as these is that they never seem like real people, partly because they are too superior, and partly because Dickson too often tells us things about them rather than showing us their qualities through their actions. These characters are constructs, not persons. On the other hand, there were characters in the book who did interest me, in particular Old Man, the Guild disciple who seems to have already achieved enlightenment and whose behavior is intriguingly enigmatic, and Cee, the feral child who has

grown up wild in the forests of Kullis after her family was slain by occupation troops. These minor characters are well-realized and convincing in a way that the major characters are not.

There seems also to be a philosophical contradiction implicit in Dickinson's characterization of Amanda as "like a queen" and his subsequent description of Rulih and Ajela as "the equivalent of royalty." Wasn't Hal supposed to be dedicated to pushing humanity toward a greater "instinctive sense of responsibility" while the Others sought "instinctive obedience"? What do royalty expect from their subjects? All of Dickinson's major characters are powerful individuals who manipulate the lives of ordinary humans at their whim, and Hal undergoes a literal apotheosis. What can humanity do but obey?

Structurally, I am puzzled by the fact that one fourth of this book is devoted to the attempt first to lure Gee out of the forest to rejoin her

uncle Artur, and then to rescue her and Artur from occupation troops. This section contains most of the action in the book and is more exciting than the rest, but it seems only tenuously linked to the main plot.

Dickson is a good writer, and I have enjoyed many of his books over the years including the early volumes in the Childie Cycle. Dickinson's Splinter Cultures are intriguing, and the early adventures among them are exciting, but as the Cycle has grown it has become oriented more and more toward philosophical abstractions rather than the felt concerns of real persons. To my mind, this makes books such as *The Chantry Guild* and, before it, *The Final Encyclopedia*, much less involving than the earlier books. ▶

David Lunde is currently living in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Smart House by Kate Wilhelm

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989; \$16.95 hc; 272 pp.

The Dark Door by Kate Wilhelm

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988; \$16.95 hc; 248 pp.

reviewed by Robert Legault

In the book catalogs I'm fond of ordering, each title is always dutifully labelled by category—SF, MYS, WEST, etc. And then there's that odd notation, MYSP. Often it's applied to spy thrillers with a high-tech element, or even to works like *A Clockwork Orange*, which don't fit comfortably into either genre in the public mind, despite what you or I might have to say about it.

Kate Wilhelm's *Smart House* is being marketed as a mystery, and a mystery it certainly is. People die mysteriously. A couple of private eyes are called in to solve the puzzle. They do. But the book comes close to being a true work of MYSP. To say how much so would give away some of the plot.

Charlie Meiklejohn and Constance Leidl are a likeable married couple—he a retired fireman and policeman, she a retired psychologist—who have become P.I.'s: Nick and Nora Charles are in their Golden Years, sort of. And, as might be suspected from their former occupations, Charlie tends to handle the "just the facts, ma'am" aspects of the investigation, while Constance manages to get the various suspects to warm up to her and tell all. They run a likeable variety of the good cop-bad cop routine.

Gary Elfringer, the young, brilliant, domineering head of the Beltringer Company, made his millions at an early age designing sophisticated musical software. For the past few years, he's been sinking the company's money into the design and construction of the Smart House, a luxurious automated house run by a built-in computer. It talks to you, knows where you are, draws you bath to the temperature you like, and manages to give a lot of people the creeps the same way talking elevators do. Except for Alexander Randall, a programmer, and Rich Schoen, the house's architect, Gary has pretty much cut himself off from society to perfect his prototype dream of better living. Now he's invited the principal stockholders of the company for a weekend to show off his new toy. These include his estranged wife, Beth; his hand-wringing mother, Maddie; and his difficult, jealous brother, Bruce.

And what better way to show off the capabilities of Smart House than that old campus favorite, the game of Assassin. You know, where you each get a victim, and toy weapons, and when you "kill" someone with your little squirtgun, or whatever, your victim's victim becomes your next victim, etc. And since this is a mystery, guess what happens. Yep, Gary and Rich are, respectively, found drowned in the Jacuzzi and suffocated. And everyone there for the weekend was really angry at Gary for dragging them there to play that stupid game... After the police can't draw any definite conclusions, Milton Sweetwater, the company attorney, calls in Charlie and Constance.

So in the high-tech house of the future on an isolated stretch of the Oregon coast, where everyone's moves for the fatal night were computer-tracked, we must unravel the various puzzles. And not least mysterious, of course, is Smart House itself. Why do the records show Gary entering his room, not leaving, and then showing up somewhere

else? Along the way Wilhelm throws in a good many speculations about the interactions of humans and computers. It's hinted that the late Mr. Elfringer was near a breakthrough in artificial intelligence. There's talk about the "negative Turing test"—how do you fool a computer into thinking you're someone else? (Easy, just give it the other person's Visa card number.)

But what ultimately brings this to the border of SF? I think the answer has nothing to do with what the ultimate technical solution to the deaths is—and, as I said, that would be giving away the fun. But as I read a book, I create my own vision of it. In the midst of a mystery, I am continually speculating about various solutions. Often the actual solution is anticlimactic after the vast hypothetical visions I've conjured up in my mind. And it's those visions, the book I create as a reader, that make this come closer in some ways to SF than some spy stories or westerns in drag that may technically fit the bill more closely. This is basically as standard a member of the mystery genre as anything by Agatha Christie, as far as death/detective/solution goes, but the speculations the reader goes through to attempt to solve the crime frequently veer off into bad dreams of a homicidal HAL-2000 lurking by that fatal Jacuzzi.

I think that's why when veteran SF writers turn out solid mystery fare like this one, it still often ends up with the *feel* of SF. Jack, um, excuse me, John Holbrook Vance's *The Pleasant Grave Murders*, for example, is as well done a police procedural as you could want, but the woman Sheriff Joe Bain becomes involved with in the middle of it feels just as much like an alien as many of Vance's extraterrestrials. And even if the deaths in Frederic Brown's *Night of the Jabberwock* are ultimately given a rational explanation, we feel like we've been on a trip to Wonderland before we're finished.

By lining up a bunch of Silicon Valley types as the leading suspects, and throwing suspicion on a computer as well, it's easy to make the leap from whodunit—and this is a whodunit in a pretty classic vein, except that it's a futuristic version of the creaky old manor house—to more cosmic speculations.

One thing—it would have been nice to include a map of Smart House for us to follow everybody's moves. Though I can think of one reason why there isn't one. But that, too, would be telling.

In *The Dark Door* we're on much more solid ground as far as the science-fictional element goes. Though it's in the same series, this book is subtitled "A Science Fiction Novel" rather than "A Charlie Meiklejohn/Constance Leidl Mystery." Now, again, defining science fiction is not always so easy, but my working definition of it (suitable for cocktail parties where someone asks me if *Neuromancer* is "really science fiction," and then tries to tell me about this fascinating new author, J.G. Ballard) is fairly simple: I just say that for me, SF means what it traditionally has meant, and then I recite the litany: the future, space travel, robots, aliens, time machines, parallel worlds, etc. If one or more

of those things is an integral part of the story, and not just tacked on like the flying saucer that shows up for about fifteen seconds in Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, then, OK—it's science fiction.

So here we are on page one. Lost: one alien space probe. Good enough. After a brief prologue in a galaxy far, far away, we find ourselves on Earth. Something in an abandoned hotel causes an outbreak of madness and murder that claims Carson Danvers's wife and son and leaves him a disfigured convalescent hiding under a dead man's identity. With the aid of the dead man's insurance company databases, he keeps track of similar occurrences. And each time the seemingly random outbreaks of insanity and unexplained murder happen, there's only one solution: burn down the building. Soon Danvers becomes an efficient one-man demolition squad, stopping the menace with gallons of gasoline and a match each time he recognizes it through random-killing statistics on his underwriters' datalink.

And when a series of unexplained arson fires with a similar m.o. all around the country keep costing the insurance companies more and more money, it's natural that they should call on veteran arson investigator Charlie Melkijohn to solve the mystery. It takes two more spells of murder madness, one in the Nevada desert, another in snowbound rural New Jersey (suspiciously near Millford, Pennsylvania) before the strange interdimensional disturbance created by the space probe is stopped. And as Charlie slowly becomes acquainted with the elusive fugitive Danvers, he finds his role changing: rather than fighting the outbreaks of arson, he finds himself actively participating in them, adding his expert advice, in a last-ditch effort to stop the menace. And Constance puts her psychological talents to the task of nursing back to health a man who can't quite remember who he's supposed to be now.

Wilhelm sets herself many technical problems to work out, both in setting the fires and avoiding the probe's effects. Though *The Dark Door* is far more overtly sf than *Smart House*, it's here that we get the real feel for crime as the various aspects of arson are meticulously described. Yet, paradoxically, *The Dark Door*, marketed as sf, has a lot more of a crime-novel atmosphere than *Smart House*, marketed as a mystery.

Talking about the interface between fiction and poetry, Julio Cortázar said in a review that "The...reader today tends to adopt a specialist attitude according to what he is reading, at times subconsciously resisting any work which presents him with mingled waters....One often hears these days of diagonal sciences, but the diagonal reader will take his time in arriving." ("An Approach to Lezama Lima," Review, Fall, 1974.) I think of myself as a diagonal reader, and I like works that stretch the limits of genres. With Charlie and Constance we have a pair of detectives who can carry a story through the usual whodunit moves very appealingly, with a deep relationship coming through with a lot of nice little touches. With the computer background to the deaths, *Smart House* has a lot of the appeal of one of those *Columbo* episodes that hinges on some strange little flaw in an otherwise airtight electronic alibi.

Having different books of the same series with the same characters marketed in different categories is a bit confusing for the book buyer, but I think it's best put down as another Sad Fact of Life rather than griping about it. Publishers are going to publish books in whatever category they think will sell.

Dead Lines by John Skipp and Craig Spector

New York: Bantam, 1989; \$3.95, pb; 305 pp

reviewed by Ashley Grayson

The cover blurb by Clive Barker says, "These guys are among the frontrunners of modern horror." If so, this book is more proof that the leaders treading new grounds are more likely to stumble than the followers of known paths. The big problem with *Dead Lines* is that it's not a novel, although it is packaged and sold as one. The title page even says "A Novel of Horror." The book is a collection of short stories previously published by Skipp and Spector, but purported to be written by one of the characters in the novella used to wrap everything into a novel-sized paperback. At worst this is misleading merchandise-

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And the Melkijohn/Leid books may not quite be genre-busting, but Wilhelm's series is certainly nudging the boundaries of the traditional mystery and, to a lesser extent, sf. If it weren't for the prologue and epilogue, which aren't quite tacked on *Laser Books*-style, but aren't totally integrated into the rest of the story either, *The Dark Door* would have more Fortean-horror overtones and would, like *Smart House*, lend itself to more wild imaginings.

As it is, it still works well, even if the novel we create in our minds is slightly more limited. *Smart House* is probably the greater technical accomplishment, but *The Dark Door* is the page-turner. If *Smart House* is tomorrow's stately home, where we come to suspect seriously that the (robot) butler did it, *The Dark Door* is the gripping hunt for a serial killer from beyond the stars.

And as well, when Charlie and Constance come under the sinister spell of the thing that makes people crazy and homicidal, we see the strengths of their relationship more deeply. That is, we get to know them a little better here; and they're certainly worth knowing. ▴

Robert Legault lives in New York and works for Tor Books.

ing. At best, the authors have crafted a true curiosity of literature—a very discussable artifact. A work more interesting for its flaws than its features, *Dead Lines* should provide a fine specimen for dissection by writer's workshops nationwide.

The premise of the book is okay—Jack, an unsuccessful writer, hangs himself in the opening chapter, leaving behind a box of short stories which are found by one of the two independent young women who take over the apartment following his demise. Meryl, the reader of the pair, proceeds to gush over the brilliance of the tales and falls

in love with the mystery writer, yearning one day to meet him. The reader expects that as she sensitizes herself to the author's persona she will eventually provide a bridge for him to return. This in fact happens, but not promptly enough nor in a way that builds enough tension.

Unfortunately we are also given the opportunity to read these stories and are considerably less impressed with them than is Meryl. While clearly the work of one person, the stories feel unrelated to each other and interrupt too frequently the story we are really interested in—the saga of Katie and Meryl in the haunted (any minute now) apartment. The voice of the stories is also the voice of the book we're reading, i.e. the voice of the suicide who is clearly not telling the tale. Thus the book is disjointed where it should be continuous, and consistent where contrast would have provided perspective.

The publisher helps us keep track of what we are reading by setting the main story in the Times Roman typeface and stories in the Optima sans serif font, which looks nothing like the typewritten manuscript described in the narrative. Italics are also used in both the Times and Optima sections for further tag material. As an added visual clue, Meryl writes all her own prose using the small "i" for the personal pronoun. The effect of all this font shifting is to cause us to flip forward looking for the reappearance of the serif font that signals the return to the main story.

But what of the story/stories? They are intriguing and repeatedly involving because Skipp and Spector are talented at creating memorable (though not likable) characters with real personalities and problems in a few paragraphs. But the stop-and-go structure provided by the short stories ultimately defeats the book.

Writing and structural attributes exist both in the short stories and in the novelizing wrapper that dilute the effect the work can achieve:

—The authors' technique is to dump their character notes into the narrative early so we know exactly how and why a particular character got to this point in time. Vital to the success of the short story, the technique wears out the reader of this pseudo-novel. We meet too many characters who live only a few pages.

—The tales fail to be scary because the episodic horror tales are

presented as fiction in the context of the novel. If it is fiction, why care? The novel overall isn't scary because the interruptions prevent the continuous building of a feeling of impending dread so key to a horror work.

—After setting up powerful, dynamic situations, the authors repeatedly choose left-field endings that fail to fulfill the promise of the opening. Here's an example. We meet a sensitive, humane young man rushing to comfort an acquaintance who has been recently brutalized by her macho boyfriend. They meet in a macho man's bar. We watch as the young man's view of her begins to shift from compassion to disrespect. The brilliant part of the tale is watching the hero becoming aware of his own metamorphosis, yet being powerless to stop it. This is great stuff. Alas, it lasts only the few paragraphs it takes the character to dash to the lavatory where the spirit of macho slime crawls from the toilet, slips in a hole in his shoe and eats his brain. He returns to the table a Marlboro-zombie.

Is this, in fact, brilliant characterization of the dead author by Skipp and Spector through the limitations of his stories? Perhaps, but we can also suggest the wrapper novel could have been better served by more direct methods of displaying the author's talents or lack thereof.

Katie and Meryl are unable to comprehend the nature of what they are threatened by and, in the end, are deprived of the chance to work out their real problems by overt acts of Jack's spirit. The promise of a possession and a haunting when Katie just strolls offstage during the finale leaving Meryl to chop bystanders into tiny bits. Is the final failure of a hack writer to screw up the novel he appears in? If so, the book is a masterful curiosity. If not, it is either a worthy attempt to be innovative or a cloud of literary smoke in which reviewers can read too much.

Some books are more fun to tell people about than to read. This is a work that is more fun to discuss with someone who has read it. Highly recommended for discussion at writer's workshops. ▲

Ashley Grayson owns a literary agency in San Pedro, California.

Read This

Recently read and Recommended by Jane Yolen

The conventional wisdom is that children who love to read fantasy books grow up to read them as adults. I'd like to suggest that the world of children's books still produces some of the finest fantasy novels—and storybooks—in genre. It would be a shame to miss them just because you have grown up!

The Lives of Christopher Chant by Diana Wynne Jones (Greenwillow)

This could be entitled "The Moral Education of a Wizard," as it is about the childhood of the boy who becomes the wizard Chrestomanci, a well-known figure in other Wynne Jones books. There is derring-do and idiot bravery and side-splitting humor, as well as a fair amount of moral dilemma, none of it didactic and all of it written in that palpable British charm that is a hallmark of Wynne Jones.

Merlin Dreams by Peter Dickinson, illustrations by Alan Lee (Gollancz)

The ending of Merlin's story is not quite what Dickinson portrays here so subtly and movingly. His Merlin chooses to be ensorcelled under a stone, teaching Nimue what she needs to know for that last bit of magic. Then the old necromancer begins to dream and each dream is a short tale or narrative poem, counterpointed by the flowing lines of Alan Lee's magical pictures: a werewolf, a dragon, a unicorn and other accoutrements of faerie step in and out of these stories, bound together by the power of the dreaming mage and Dickinson's taut, perceptive prose.

The Mermaid Summer by Mollie Hunter (Harper & Row)

This extended fairy tale is about a mermaid/siren's curse

on a family of Scottish fisherfolk. And it is about how the son Jon and the daughter Anna manage to save the entire village from the mermaid's wrath and bring their exiled grandfather home. Hunter, a Scotswoman and well-known storyteller, uses her background and the lyrical language she was born into to good effect in this tale. It is one of those stories that begs to be read aloud over a week of cold nights, with the fire glowing in the hearth.

AND IF YOU NEVER READ...

The Bat Poet by Randall Jarrell (Macmillan)

First published in 1963, this animal fantasy by poet Jarrell is one of the most perfect pieces of writing about writing and about the creative spirit. A young brown bat is that odd sort that makes others uncomfortable—he asks questions, demands answers, writes poems. Decorated with gentle line drawings by Maurice Sendak at the height of his first great career (he has had three—in illustration, in theater, and in superstardom), this delicate, powerful little volume is to be treasured.

Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt (Farrar, Straus)

Arguably one of the top five fantasies for children ever written, this gem came out in 1975. It is a book that encompasses the meaning of life because it is about an ordinary family that well over 150 years ago stumbled onto the secret of immortality in the waters of a stream. They have been wrestling with the problems of being everlasting ever since. When they meet young Winnie Foster one late August day, her life—theirs—and the reader's will never be the same. Babbitt's prose style is pellucid; it glows with perfect perception, yet her message(s) never overshadows the story—Winnie's story—and the ending, deliciously bittersweet, is perfect.

Work in Progress

A Bibliographic Checklist of First Editions
by L. W. Currey

Draft: Revised 10/88

THOMAS BURNETT SWANN
(1928-1976)

CRY SILVER BELLS. New York: DAW Books, Inc., [1977].
Wrappers. First printing, December 1977/1 2 3 4 5
8 7 8 9 on copyright page. DAW: sf Books No. 270
UW1345 (\$1.50).

DAY OF THE MINOTAUR. New York: Ace Books, Inc.,
[1966].
Wrappers. No statement of printing on copyright
page. Ace Book F-407 (40¢).

THE DOLPHIN AND THE DEEP. New York: Ace Books,
Inc., [1968].
Wrappers. No statement of printing on copyright
page. Ace Book G-694 (50¢).

THE FOREST OF FOREVER. New York: Ace Books,
[1971].
Wrappers. No statement of printing on copyright
page. Ace Book 24650 (60¢).

THE GOAT WITHOUT HORNS. New York: Ballantine
Books, [1971].
Wrappers. First Printing: October, 1971 on copy-
right page. Ballantine Books Fantasy Adventure
022395-1-095 (95¢).

THE GODS ABIDE. New York: DAW Books, Inc., [1976].
Wrappers. First printing, December 1976/1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 on copyright page. DAW: sf Books No. 222
UY 1272 (\$1.25).

GREEN PHOENIX. New York: DAW Books, Inc., [1972].
Wrappers. First printing 1972 on copyright page.
DAW: sf Books No. 27 UQ 1027 (95¢).

HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN. New York: DAW Books,
Inc., [1974].
Wrappers. First printing: March 1974/1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 on copyright page. DAW: sf Books No. 94 UQ
1100 (95¢).

LADY OF THE BEES. New York: Ace Books, [1976].
Wrappers. First Ace printing: May 1976 on copy-
right page. Ace 46850 (\$1.25).

THE MINIKINS OF YAM. New York: DAW Books, Inc.,

[1976].
Wrappers. First printing, February 1976/1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 on copyright page. DAW: sf Books No. 182
UY1219 (\$1.25).

MOONDUST. New York: Ace Books, Inc., [1968].
Wrappers. No statement of printing on copyright
page. Ace Book G-758 (50¢).

THE NOT-WORLD. New York: DAW Books, Inc., [1975].
Wrappers. First printing, February 1975/1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 on copyright page. DAW: sf Books No. 140
UY1158 (\$1.25).

QUEENS WALK IN THE DUSK. Forest Park, Georgia:
Heritage Press, Inc., 1977.
No statement of printing on copyright page. 2000
numbered copies printed. Note: Issued in an un-
printed acetate dust jacket.

TOURNAMENT OF THORNS. New York: Ace Books,
[1976].
Wrappers. First Ace printing: July 1976 on copy-
right page. Ace 81900 (\$1.50).

THE WEIRWOODS. New York: Ace Books, Inc., [1967].
Wrappers. No statement of printing on copyright
page. Ace Book G-640 (50¢).

WHERE IS THE BIRD OF FIRE? New York: An Ace Book,
[1970].
Wrappers. No statement of printing on copyright
page. Ace Book G-640 (60¢).

WILL-O-THE-WISP. [London]: Corgi Books, [1976].
Wrappers. Corgi edition published 1976 on copy-
right page. Corgi Science Fantasy 0 552 10358 6
(60p).

WOLFINTER. New York: Ballantine Books, [1972].
Wrappers. First Printing: November, 1972 on copy-
right page. Ballantine Books Science Fiction
02905-4-125 (\$1.25).

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Thomas Burnett Swann: A Brief Critical Biography and An-
notated Bibliography, by Robert A. Collins, Boca Raton,
Florida: The Thomas Burnett Swann Fund College of
Humanities Florida Atlantic University, April 1979.
Wrappers. No statement of printing.

Note: This is part of a series of bibliographic checklists of SF and fantasy writers that will update, revise, and expand the standard reference work *Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors* by L. W. Currey. For the organizational principles and methodology used in this and future lists, please refer to the introduction to that work. Knowledgeable persons are invited to communicate addenda and corrigenda directly to L. W. Currey, Elizabethtown, NY 12932.

1988 Recalled:
Read and Recommended by
The New York Review of Science Fiction:

As a magazine that loves and publishes other people's reading lists, we couldn't let the last year pass without probing our collective memory to produce a list of our own. We don't pretend to have included every notable work that saw print in this year of robot space shrines, Roger Abbot, and Glen Goryla. Still, if you miss out any of the works below, it's not too late to do yourself a favor and track down some highlights of the not so distant past. Let's start with the books...

The Wine-Dark Beauty by Robert Alderman (Jarrold). This solid collection of Alderman's "strange stories" gives us a sense of how much of a loss Alderman's 1981 death really was. For those who haven't read him, this book will show you why Alderman is known as one of the best writers of the British ghost story.

Great Sky River by Gregory Benford (Bantam). The book has the density and complexity we have come to expect from Gene Wolfe, along with Benford's usual virtuosic characterization and a hard science edge. Particularly lovely is the use of what is essentially the Victorian ghost story to describe the experience of electronic brain augmentation (in the cyborgs).

Fire on the Mountain by Terry Bisson (Akon/Morrow). For the grace of its prose and the audaciousness of its vision, as well as for proving (once again) that the best novels don't have to be book-sized.

Scores of the Moon by Jonathan Carroll (Faber/Faure). This horrific fantasy, about a woman who has an abortion and then visits the fantasy world of Rapture in her dreams, illuminates much about the connection between selfishness and selflessness, as well as about the metaphorical meaning of the abortion issue.

The Motion of Light in Water by Samuel R. Delany (Arbor House). Subtitled "Sex and Science-Fiction Writing in the East Village," this fascinating autobiography delivers the same mixture of rigorous analysis, thought, explicit language and sheer narrative drive we've come to expect from Delany's novels.

Black Ambrosia by Elizabeth Engstrom (TOR). A disturbing and very uncomfortable vampire novel by a promising new talent.

Waiting for the Galactic Bus by Parker Goodwin (Doubleday). A delightful morality play that could be a Divine Comedy for the 80's.

The Medusa Propaganda by Russell Hoban (Wing). This book is more a book-length prose poem than a novel, but one lends itself to reading aloud after only a few pages. It's about the link between the creation of art and Lovecraftian forbidden knowledge. The severed head of Ophiurus manifests itself to the protagonist, most comically as the principal appetizer of a big-movie dated luncheon.

Kalios by Gwyneth Jones (Jewish Home). By the end of the 21st century, Britons have lost many of their civil rights, television has become a medium by which scientism is no longer separate from programming, and BREAKTHROUGH UK (sic) has developed the reality-changing drug Kalios and with Kalios, BREAKTHROUGH UK achieves the apocalypse: the world comes to an end and in true British fashion the characters say, "Hadoomedey, thank you, we're British." A terrifying and exquisitely written novel.

In the Chinks of the World Machine by Sarah Le Fanu (The Women's Press). An intelligent analysis of feminism and science fiction, written by someone who achieves both. We had to wait more than a decade since the heyday of feminist sf for a book like this but it was worth it for this one.

Unquestionable Fire by Rachel Pollack (Century/Hutchinson). A religious utopian feminist fantasy novel set in an alternate universe present-day Poughkeepsie is enough to cause most category readers to blink twice. Too bad for them. This is not only one of the best fantasy novels of the year, it's one of the best of the decade, and perhaps the best feminist novel of the decade, too.

Equal River by Terry Pratchett (Signet). Pratchett is the funniest parodist working in the field today, period.

Strains by Paul Preuss (TOR). Preuss is heir to the slick style of Algis Budrys and to the sensibility of Arthur C. Clarke. This is a hard SF (it even has a diagram) and rich characterization. Nice, clean-out adventure in space the way it used to be, but seldom was, and better written than it ever was. Buy, as Preuss underlines it, Read it now.

Three-Ace Dorothy Gene Wolfe (TOR). This secondary novel in which a man falls in love with a woman who likes—because she is a goddess in an alternate universe (machines through curtain doorways) and in her world, when a man loves a woman, he dies. He follows her in the face of death. Another unique book from our finest writer.

The Lark of the New Sun by Gene Wolfe (TOR). Complex, vast, bewildering and well worth the struggle.

Terminator by Jack Womack (Viking/Delacorte). A near-satirical style-time-travel novel in which characters from a future consumerist Soviet Union (perhaps the first seed-up of the Garbarov years past) meet in sf travel back in time to New York in 1939, though not pursuant novelties. The style is dramatic and lively. Its view of the future is refreshing.

MO: A Family Romance by Stephen Wright (Harcourt). A boldly envisioned novel about a UFOlogist that lies on one of sf's least explored,

Next issue, the short fiction of 1988.

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